John Gibbin

A

Preſervative

AGAINST

POPERY:

Being ſome Plain

DIRECTIONS

TO

Unlearned PROTESTANTS,

How to Diſpute with

Romiſh Prieſts.

The Firſt PART.

By *WILLIAM SHERLOCK*, D. D.
Maſter of the *Temple.*

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A PRESERVATIVE AGAINST POPERY.

The Introduction.

While so many Learned Pens are employed to such excellent purpose, in answering the Writings, and confuting the Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome, *I cannot but think it a very useful Work to give some plain Directions to those, who are Unlearned, who have neither Time to Read, nor Money to Buy, nor Abilities to Understand more Learned Controversies. Our Divines indeed have taken great care to write short Tracts, with great Plainness and Perspicuity, and with as little unnecessary shew of Learning as may be, to fit them the better for Unlearned Readers; and they have had, by the blessing of God, wonderful Success; Popery was never so generally understood, as it is at this day; the meanest Tradesmen can now dispute against Popery with sufficient Skill and Judgment, and need not be beholding to the prejudices of Education to secure them: and therefore my business shall not be at present down-right to State any one Controversie be-*

tween us, and the Church of Rome, *but to direct our People how to secure themselves against the Attaques of our* Roman *Adversaries, to check their conferring and disputing Humour, or to baffle them. I shall reduce all into as plain a Method and as short a Compass as I can, and shew,*

First, *How to stop them at the beginning of their Dispute.*

Secondly, *Give some Rules about the Topicks, from which they Dispute, such as Reason, Scripture, and the Authority of the Ancient Fathers and Writers of the Church.*

Thirdly, *How to Answer some of their most popular Pretences, such as the Uncertainty of the Protestant Religion, the Mis-representations of Popery,* &c.

Fourthly, *To give some short Directions as to particular Controversies.*

CHAP. I.

How Protestants may prevent Disputing with Papists.

NOw I do not by this mean, that they should always avoid their Company, and run away from them where-ever they meet them, which is very ill Manners; though it is not adviseable neither to court such Acquaintance, or to make them our Intimates, when neither the Obligations of Nature, nor other Civil or Political Reasons make it necessary; for Conversation many times prevails more than Arguments can do, and will as soon corrupt Mens Faith, as Manners.

Nor do I mean, that Protestants should obstinately refuse to Discourse with Papists when they meet them; to hear

hear what they have to say for themselves, and to give a Reason for their own Faith; this is not agreeable to Protestant Principles, To prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good: and yet this ought to be done with great prudence and caution too; for there are a sort of perverse Disputers, who are to be avoided according to the Apostolick Precept, *If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholsome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, perverse disputing of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing, that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thy self,* 1 Tim. 6. 3, 4, 5.

Men of weak Judgments, and who are not skilled in the Laws of Disputation, may easily be imposed on by cunning Sophisters, and such as lie in wait to Deceive: The Church of *Rome* is very sensible of this, and therefore will not suffer her People to dispute their Religion, or to read Heretical Books, nay not so much as to look into the *Bible* it self; but though we allow all this to our People, as that which God not only allows, but requires, and which all considering Men will allow themselves, whoever forbids it; yet we do not allow them to be perpetual Seekers, to be always doubtful of their Religion, to be like *children tossed too and fro with every wind of Doctrine*. And therefore the liberty of Judging and Inquiring, which we allow, is only that they may understand the true Reasons of their Faith, and be well grounded in it, which men may be, who are not able to answer every cavilling Objection; but it is an abuse of this liberty, when men have itching Ears, and hearken after all Novelties of Opinions, and grow wanton and sceptical Disputers; and therefore it is very consistent with that liber-

ty, which Proteſtants allow, to adviſe Chriſtians to be very careful how they hearken to ſuch as Preach any new Doctrine, which they have not been taught; that the weak in Faith and Knowledge ſhould not venture upon doubtful Diſputations; that they ſhould not be haſty to queſtion what they have believed, nor to give heed to new Doctrines; that they ſhould not rely on their own underſtanding in theſe matters, but when they meet with any difficulties, ſhould conſult their Spiritual Guides, not to be finally determined by their Authority, as the Church of *Rome* requires, but to hear their Reaſons, and what Anſwers they can give to ſuch difficulties, as they themſelves cannot anſwer. With ſuch Cautions as theſe, we dare venture our People to hear, and read, and enquire, as much as they pleaſe, and have not found yet, that our *Roman* Adverſaries have been able to make any great impreſſion upon ſuch honeſt and prudent Inquirers. But that which I intend at preſent, is of another nature, to teach our People a Way to make theſe men ſick of Diſputing themſelves, to make them leave off thoſe Impertinent and Noiſie Squabbles, with which they diſturb all Company they come into: and this is no ſuch mighty Secret neither, as may be expected, but is very plain and obvious at the firſt propoſal.

For when you are aſſaulted by ſuch troubleſome Diſputers, only ask them, Whether they will allow you to Judge for your ſelves in matters of Religion? if they will not, why do they trouble you with Diſputing? for the end of Diſputing, is to convince; and you cannot be convinced, unleſs you may Judge too. Would they diſpute with a Stone, that can neither hear, nor underſtand? or would they make a Speech to convince a Horſe, that he is out of his way, and muſt take another Road, if he would return home? And do not they talk to as little purpoſe, and

and ſpend their breath as vain upon a man, who can hear indeed, and underſtand ſomewhat, but muſt not follow his own underſtanding? If they ſay, that you muſt Judge for your ſelves; ask them, Whether this be the Doctrine of their Church, that private men may Judge for themſelves? Whether this do not reſolve our Faith into a private Spirit, which they ſay, is the Proteſtant Hereſie, and the Foundation of Proteſtant Uncertainty? If they once open this Gap to Hereticks into the Church, there is great danger that more will run out at it, than will come in; and it's well if the Church it ſelf ſtays behind: for what becomes of the Church of *Rome*, if all their glorious Cant of the Infallibility of Church, and Popes, and General Councils, be at laſt reſolved into a private Spirit! While theſe men go about to diſpute Hereticks into their Church, they unavoidably give up the Cauſe of the Church, and of Infallibility; which is the way to diſpute a great many good Catholicks out of it, who are kept there only by the power of a blind and implicite Faith. Here then let our Proteſtant fix his foot, and not ſtir an inch, till they diſown Infallibility, and confeſs, that every man can and muſt Judge for himſelf in matters of Religion, according to the Proofs that are offered to him. For will a wiſe man diſpute with one, who he knows banters him all the while? who appeals to his private Judgment (as all men do, who diſpute with one another) and at the ſame time cries down this private Spirit as the cauſe of Schiſms, and Hereſies, and Blaſphemies, and every thing that is evil: no man of any Spirit, but will ſcorn to diſpute with one who intends only to put a trick on him, and to out-wit him if he can; and in truth it is no more to endeavour to diſpute a man into Popery, when the Fundamental Principle of Popery is, That we muſt not Reaſon and Diſpute, but Believe; that we muſt take

our

our Faith upon the Authority of the Church, without asking any queſtions about it. There are two or three things, which may be anſwered to this.

I. That though Diſputing be not a proper way for Papiſts to take, yet it is the only way, that can be taken with Proteſtants, who are all for Diſputing, and will believe nothing without a Reaſon; and therefore Proteſtants ought not to blame Papiſts for Diſputing, unleſs they would be good Catholicks without it. Now in anſwer to this, I have ſomething to ſay to Papiſts, and ſomething to Proteſtants.

1. As for the Papiſts, what neceſſity ſoever they be in of Diſputing, I deſire to know, with what face they can reproach Proteſtants with adhering to their own private Judgments, when they themſelves are ſuch zealous Diſputants, which is an Appeal to every private mans Judgment: If ever they make any Converts, they muſt be beholden to mens private Judgments for it, for I think men cannot change their Opinions, without exerciſing a private Judgment about it; and I ſuppoſe when they diſpute with men to make them Papiſts, they intend to convert them by their own private Judgments. Now what difference is there between mens uſing their private Judgments to turn Papiſts, or to turn Proteſtants? One indeed may be falſe, and the other true; but private Judgment is private Judgment ſtill: and if it be ſo great a fault for men to uſe their own private Judgments, it is as great a fault in a Papiſt, as it is in a Proteſtant. So that at leaſt, as to Converts, the Church of *Rome* has no advantage in this particular over Proteſtant Churches; ſome by the exerciſe of their own Reaſon and Judgment, go over to the Church of *Rome*, and ſome to the Church of *England*; ſome are diſputed into Popery, and ſome into Proteſtantiſm: and therefore for the ſake of their beloved Con-

Converts, and their beloved Diſputations, they ought to be more favourable to a private Spirit: The truth is, by diſputing with Hereticks, they give up their Cauſe, and confeſs, that in all Diſputes of Religion, their lies an Appeal to every mans private Judgment and Conſcience; and ſhould they loſe this Point by their Diſputing, all the Converts they make, cannot recompence ſuch a loſs.

2. As for Proteſtants, though they have no other way to ſatisfie themſelves, or to convince others, but by Reaſon and Diſcourſe; yet this is no reaſon why they ſhould Diſpute with thoſe men who diſown the Judgment of Reaſon, as a private Spirit: For why ſhould I Diſpute with any man who uſes ſuch Arguments to convince me, as he himſelf does not think a ſufficient Reaſon of Faith? Ask then one of theſe Diſputers, who alledges Scripture, Reaſon and Antiquity, to prove any Doctrines of the *Romiſh* Faith, Do you, Sir, believe Tranſubſtantiation, the Worſhip of Images, the Invocation of Saints, Purgatory, Maſs for the Dead, upon the bare Authority of theſe Scriptures and Fathers, you have produced for them? if theſe Doctrines were not Defined by the Church, ſhould you think theſe Arguments ſufficient to prove them? or could you ſuppoſe, the Church had Defined the contrary, ſhould you think the Arguments good ſtill? In ſhort, can any Reaſon, any Authority of Scripture, or Fathers, be any Foundation for a Divine Faith, but only the Authority of the Church? He that ſays they can, is no Papiſt; and he that ſays they cannot, confeſſes, that he uſes ſuch Arguments, as he himſelf does not build his Faith upon: If you will believe them, you may; but though you do, you are no ſound Believer, without reſolving your Faith ſolely into the Authority of the Church. And, I think, he muſt love

Diſpu-

Diſputing well, who will diſpute with ſuch men as theſe; and thoſe muſt have a good degree of Aſſurance, who will be troubleſome with their Diſputes, after ſuch a diſcovery. The end of Diſputing, I ſuppoſe, is either to convince, or to be convinced: but ſhould you anſwer and baffle all ſuch a man's Arguments, if he be modeſt, it may be he may bluſh a little, but is not to be moved; for his Faith, after all, is not built upon theſe Arguments, but upon Church-Authority: and it is to no purpoſe for you to ſuffer your ſelf to be convinced by theſe Arguments, for it will not make you a good Catholick, without reſolving your Faith wholly into the Authority of the Church. It is certainly a very ſurprizing thing for a Proteſtant to be diſputed into Popery; for as ſoon as he is converted, he muſt renounce the very means of his Converſion: He muſt uſe his own Judgment to turn Papiſt, and as ſoon as he is turned, he muſt renounce his own Judgment, and confeſs it to be of no Authority: Now though it may be ſuch a private Judgment as leads a man to Popery, may as well deſerve to be renounced, as any; yet it is an odd kind of contradiction, to renounce our own private Reaſon and Judgment, and yet to own our Converſion; methinks ſuch men ſhould renounce their Converſion too at the ſame time they renounce their Reaſon; for if their Converſion be good, it is a ſign their Judgment was ſo; but if their Judgment be not fit to be truſted, methinks this ſhould make them queſtion their Converſion: And therefore they ſhould either maintain the Reputation of their Judgment and Converſion together, and then they cannot be good Catholicks, while they adhere to their own Judgment, or they ſhould renounce them both together; nay, they muſt not only renounce their own Judgments, as ſoon as they are converted, but they muſt renounce the Authority and Vali-

Validity of thoſe very Arguments whereby they are Converted, whether from Scripture, Reaſon, or Fathers; they muſt confeſs, that theſe Arguments are not a ſufficient Foundation for a Divine Faith, without the Authority of the Church; for it is a dangerous thing to allow any Authority to Scripture or Fathers, without the Church, for that may make men Hereticks; and yet, I ſuppoſe, when Hereticks are converted by theſe Arguments, it muſt be the force of the Arguments, and not the Authority of the Church, which converts them, unleſs they believed the Authority of the Church before they were converted, and that was a little too early for it. Now methinks when Proteſtants turn Papiſts, as they pretend, from the conviction of their own Reaſon and Judgment, and as ſoon as they are converted, are taught, that there is no relying upon their own Judgment, and that the Reaſons whereby they were converted, are not good in themſelves without Church Authority; if it were poſſible for them ever to uſe their Reaſon more after ſuch a Change, it would certainly make them diſown their Converſion; which, it ſeems, was the effect of a very fallible Judgment, and very uncertain and inauthentick Reaſon.

II. There is another pretence for theſe Diſputes, which may ſeem to anſwer this difficulty, that the intention of theſe Diſputes, is onely to lead you to the Infallible Church, and ſet you upon a Rock; and then it is very natural to renounce your own Judgment, when you have an infallible Guide. Our own Judgment then muſt bring us to the infallible Guide, and when we have found him, we have no farther uſe for our own Judgment. I anſwer,

1. Should we grant this, it puts an end to all the particular Diſputes of Religion between us and the Church

of *Rome:* We may diſpute on about an Infallible Judge, but they cannot, with any ſence, diſpute with us about the particular Articles of Faith, ſuch as Tranſubſtantiation, the Sacrifice of the Maſs, the Worſhip of Images, and the like; for theſe are to be learnt onely from the Church, and cannot be proved by Scripture or Fathers, without the Authority of the Church. And if they would confeſs this, they would ſave us, and themſelves, a great deal of trouble: For why ſhould they be at the trouble of writing ſuch Arguments, or we to anſwer them, when they themſelves confeſs, that the Arguments are not good, unleſs they be confirmed by the Churches Authority? I confeſs, I have often wondered to ſee ſuch Volumes of Controverſies written by the *Roman* Divines, for I could never imagine to what end they are writ. Is not their Faith wholly reſolved into the Authority of the Church? what need Reaſons and Arguments then, which cannot work Faith in us? Either theſe Arguments are ſufficient to confirm the Articles of their Faith without the Authority of the Church, or they are not: If they are, then there is no need of Infallibility, ſince all the Articles of Faith are confirmed by ſuch Reaſons, as are a ſufficient Foundation for Faith without it: And thus they give up all their Arguments for an Infallible Judge, from the neceſſity of ſuch a Judge. If they be not, of what uſe are they? does the Deciſion of the Church need to be confirmed by ſuch Arguments? If they are not good Arguments without the Authority of the Church, they can no more give Authority to the Church, than an Infallible Church can want any Authority, but its own: Are they to convince Hereticks? But how if Hereticks ſhould confute them? If they be not in themſelves good Arguments, they may be confuted; and they know, by ſad experience, that there are Hereticks,

ticks, as they call them, who have Wit and Learning enough to confute, what is to be confuted; and if they fall into ſuch hands (which has been their hard fate of late) they are ſure to be confuted; and, I doubt then, they had better have let them alone; for the Catholick Cauſe may ſuffer much in the Opinion of the World, when all their Arguments are confuted: All then that they can deſign by ſuch Arguments, is to impoſe upon the Weak and Ignorant, when Learned Men are out of the way, which is no very commendable deſign; and that deſign will be ſpoiled too, if Unlearned Men do but learn to ask them the Queſtion, Whether they build their Faith upon ſuch Arguments? For then they muſt either quit the Authority of their Church, or the ſtrength of their Arguments: The firſt reduces them to Proteſtant Uncertainty, for then they have no other Foundation for their Faith than Proteſtants have; which reſolves it ſelf into the Reaſons and Arguments of Faith: The ſecond puts an end to Diſputing about theſe matters; for no man needs anſwer any Arguments, which the Diſputant himſelf acknowledges not to be good.

2. There is nothing then left for Diſputation, and the Exerciſe of our private Reaſon and Judgment, but the inquiry after an Infallible Judge. And here alſo, before you Diſpute, it will be neceſſary to ask them, Whether the belief of an Infallible Judge, muſt be reſolved into every mans private Judgment? whether it be not neceſſary to believe this with a Divine Faith? and whether there can be any Divine Faith without an Infallible Judge? Certainly if ever it be neceſſary to have an Infallible Faith, it is ſo to be infallibly aſſured of an Infallible Judge, becauſe this is the foundation of all the reſt: for though the Judge be Infallible, if I be not infallibly aſſured of this, I can never arrive to Infallibility in any thing; for

I cannot be more certain, that his Determinations are Infallible, than I am, that he himself is Infallible; and if I have but a Moral assurance of this, I can be but morally assured of the rest; for the Building cannot be more firm than the Foundation is: and thus there is an end to all the *Roman* Pretences to Infallibility. Now if we must believe the Infallibility of the Church, or Pope of *Rome*, with an infallible Faith, there is an end of Disputing; for no Reasons or Arguments, not the Authority of the Scripture it self, without an infallible Judge, can beget an infallible Faith, according to the *Roman* Doctors: For this reason they charge the Protestant Faith with Uncertainty, and will not allow it to be a Divine, but Humane Faith, though it is built upon the firmest Reasons, the best Authority, and the most express Scripture that can be had for any thing; but because we do not pretend to rely on the Authority of a Living Infallible Judge, therefore, forsooth, our Faith is Uncertain, Humane, and Fallible: and this, they say, makes an Infallible Judge necessary, because without him we have no Infallible Certainty of any thing.

Now if nothing but an Infallible Judge can be the Foundation of an Infallible Faith, then it is to no purpose to dispute about such a Judge; for Disputing is nothing else but weighing Reason against Reason, and Argument against Argument, or Scripture against the pretence of Scripture; but whoever gets the better of it this way, no Reasons, or Arguments, or Scripture-proofs can beget an Infallible Certainty, which is necessary in this case; and therefore this is all lost labour, and they do but put a trick upon you, when they pretend to dispute you into the belief of an Infallible Judge; for they themselves know, and must confess, if you ask them, that the best and most convincing Arguments cannot give us an Infallible

lible aſſurance of this matter; and yet unleſs we are infallibly aſſured of an Infallible Judge, it is all to no purpoſe.

3. I can think but of one thing more, that can be ſaid in this Cauſe, *viz.* that it is manifeſtly unreaſonable, not to grant to the Church of *Rome*, that liberty which all men and Churches challenge, to Diſpute for themſelves, and againſt their Adverſaries: for when two men, or two Churches differ in matters of *Faith*, there is no other way to end the Controverſie, but by diſputing it out; whereas this Diſcourſe will not allow them to diſpute, nor any Proteſtants to diſpute with them.

In anſwer to this, I grant, that the Charge is in a great meaſure true, and ſhews the abſurdity of that Church and Religion, but does not diſprove the reaſonableneſs of this method. If men will embrace ſuch a Religion as will not admit of diſputing, it is their own and their Religion's fault, not the fault of thoſe men who will not diſpute with them. Now a Religion which leaves no room for the exerciſe of Reaſon and private Judgment, leaves no place for Diſputes neither; for how ſhall men diſpute, who muſt not uſe their own Reaſon and Judgment? They ought not to diſpute themſelves, if they be true to their own Principles; and no man ought to diſpute with them, who will not be laugh'd at by them, and by all the World: For to diſpute without Reaſon, is a new way of diſputing, (though it is the only thing that can juſtifie the Romaniſts, and our late Diſputants have been very careful to obſerve it;) and to diſpute with Reaſon, is to uſe our private Reaſon in Religion, which is Proteſtant Hereſie. Infallible men ought not to diſpute, for that is to quit their Infallibility; and fallible men are very unwiſe to diſpute with them, becauſe no good can come of it: for Reaſon can never

never confute their infallible Adverſaries, nor make themſelves infallible Believers.

But for the better underſtanding of this, I have two things to ſay. 1. That Papiſts may Diſpute againſt Proteſtant Hereſies, as they call them, but cannot diſpute for their own Religion. 2. Proteſtants may diſpute againſt Popiſh Doctrines, and to vindicate their own Faith, but cannot reaſonably be diſputed into Popery.

1. That Papiſts may diſpute againſt Proteſtant Hereſies, but cannot diſpute for their own Religion: And the reaſon of this difference is plain, becauſe Proteſtants allow of Reaſon and Diſcourſe in matters of Religion; and therefore they may be confuted, if good Reaſons can be produced againſt them: And here the Romaniſts may try their skill; but the Religion of *Rome* is not founded on Reaſon, but on Infallibility; and therefore is not the ſubject of a Diſpute, becauſe the truth and certainty of thoſe Doctrines, is not reſolved into the Reaſons of them. They ought to alledge no other ground of their Faith, but the Infallibility of the Church; and they ought not to diſpute about this neither: but thoſe who will believe it may, and thoſe who won't, may let it alone, becauſe Infallibility is not to be proved by Reaſon; for Reaſon proves nothing infallibly, and therefore cannot give us an infallible certainty of the Churches Infallibility.

But you will ſay, if they have other Arguments for the truth of their Faith, beſides the Infallibility of the Church, why may they not urge thoſe other Reaſons and Arguments to convince thoſe, who will not own the Churches Infallibility? I anſwer, Becauſe whatever other Reaſons they have, their Faith is not reſolved into them; and therefore it is not honeſt in them to urge thoſe

thoſe for the Reaſons of their Faith, which are not the Reaſons why they believed: For let me ask them, Suppoſe they may have very good Reaſons for ſome of their Doctrines, do they believe them meerly becauſe they are reaſonable? If they ſay they do; then they believe juſt as Proteſtants believe; and there is no need of Infallibility, when men believe nothing but what is reaſonable; and it is pity that ſo good a thing as Infallibility ſhould ſerve onely to ſupport an unreaſonable Faith.

Let me ask them again, Can they have a ſufficient certainty, that theſe Reaſons are good, without an infallible Judge? If they can, then the Faith of Proteſtants, which is grounded upon rational Evidences, may be very certain too, though it be not infallible; if they cannot, then their Reaſons are none, ſince the very certainty of them is reſolved into an infallible Authority; and therefore they are no certain Reaſons, that is, not ſuch as a man may rely on, when they are ſeparated from Infallibility; and conſequently they ought never to be urged apart from Infallibility, becauſe they themſelves do not think them good Reaſons, that is, not a ſufficient Foundation of Faith alone: and then I know not why they ſhould be urged at all; for Infallibility can ſtand by it ſelf, without the ſupport of any Reaſons.

I ask them again, would they reject thoſe Doctrines which they think they can prove by ſuch evident Reaſons, did they ſee thoſe Reaſons as evidently confuted? If they would not, then it is plain, they do not believe them for the ſake of thoſe Reaſons; for if they did, they would reject them, when all their Reaſons were confuted: They only impoſe upon the World with a pretence and flouriſh of Reaſon, and ſet up a Man of Straw for Proteſtants to ſhoot at; but whatever becomes

comes of their Reaſons, they have a ſafe Retreat into Infallibility.

If they believed any Doctrine becauſe it is reaſonable, if they will be true to themſelves, they ought to reject all Doctrines, which are unreaſonable, or contrary to Senſe and Reaſon: He who believes for the ſake of Reaſon, can never believe againſt it: for if Reaſon makes a thing credible, then what is unreaſonable is incredible too; and we may as reaſonably diſ-believe what is confirmed by Reaſon, as believe what Reaſon contradicts: and therefore it is not very modeſt to hear men talk of Reaſon in any caſe, who can believe ſuch an abſurd and unreaſonable Doctrine as Tranſubſtantiation.

Now whatever Opinion Proteſtants have of Reaſon, Papiſts ought not to pretend to it, becauſe their Faith has nothing to do with Reaſon; it is a Reproach to an infallible Church and infallible Faith, to need the ſupports of Reaſons. And the truth is, thoſe who will have nothing to do with Reaſon, Reaſon commonly has as little to do with them, but owes them a Shame, whenever they pretend to her; and therefore they had as good let her alone.

2. Proteſtants may diſpute againſt Popiſh Doctrines, and to vindicate their own Faith, but they cannot reaſonably be diſputed into Popery. When Papiſts alledge Scripture, Reaſon, or humane Authority for any Doctrines of their Religion, Proteſtants, who allow of the uſe of Reaſon in Religion, may examine and confute them: when Papiſts diſpute againſt Proteſtant Doctrines, Proteſtants are concerned to vindicate their own Faith, or to renounce it; but if a Proteſtant underſtands himſelf and his own Principles, all the Diſputes in the World can never make him a Papiſt. For to be a Papiſt, does not ſignifie meerly to believe Tranſubſtantiation,

tion, or the Worſhip of Saints and Images, and ſuch-like Popiſh Doctrines; but to reſolve our Faith into the Infallible Authority of the Church, and to believe whatever the Church believes, and for no other reaſon, but becauſe the Church teaches it. This is the peculiar and diſtinguiſhing Character of the Church of *Rome*, which divides it from all other Churches and Sects of Chriſtians; and therefore our late Popiſh Writers are certainly in the right, to endeavour to bring the whole Controverſie to this iſſue; not to diſpute about particular Doctrines, which follow on courſe, when once you believe the Church to be Infallible; but to perſwade men that the Church is Infallible, and that the Church of *Rome* is that Infallible Church. Now I ſay, no underſtanding Proteſtant can be diſputed into this kind of Popery, and that for two plain Reaſons. 1. Becauſe no Arguments or Diſputations can give me an infallible certainty of the Infallibility of the Church. 2. Becauſe it is impoſſible by Reaſon to prove, that men muſt not uſe their own Reaſon and Judgment in matters of Religion.

1. No Arguments can give me an infallible certainty of the Infallibility of the Church. The great Motive to any man to forſake the other Communions of Chriſtians, and to go over to the Church of *Rome*, is to attain an Infallibility in Faith, which is a wonderful good thing, if it were to be had; but though the Church of *Rome* were Infallible, and I ſhould be convinced that there were ſome reaſon to think ſo, yet unleſs I can be infallibly aſſured of it, my Faith is ſtill as fallible as the Proteſtant Faith is; and I am no nearer to Infallibility in the Church of *Rome*, than in the Church of *England*. For as I obſerved before, unleſs I can have an infallible certainty of the Infallibility of the Church, I can have no Infallibility at all: Though the Church were infal-

ible in all her Decrees, I can never be infallibly certain of the truth of her Decrees, unleſs I be infallibly certain that ſhe is infallible. It is a known Rule in Logic, that the Concluſion muſt follow the weaker part, and therefore it is impoſſible to infer an infallible Faith from the fallible Belief of the Churches Infallibility.

And yet the beſt Reaſons in the World (which is all that diſputing can do, to offer Reaſons for our Faith) cannot give us an infallible certainty, becauſe Reaſon it ſelf is not an infallible Principle, at leaſt the Church of *Rome* dares not own, that any mans private Reaſon and Judgment is infallible; for then Proteſtants may ſet up for Infallibility as well as Papiſts. No man, by Reaſon and Argument, can arrive at a greater Certainty than Proteſtants may have, and yet no man can arrive at greater certainty in the way of diſputing, than Reaſon and Argument can give him; and then a Popiſh Convert, who is reaſoned into the belief of Infallibility, though he has changed his Opinion, yet has no more Infallibility now, than he had when he was a Proteſtant. Proteſtants, without an Infallible Church, may have all the Certainty that Reaſon and Argument can give them; and a Convert has no greater Certainty (if he have no more than what Diſputing could give him) for his Infallible Church: And how is it poſſible then, that a reaſonable man can be diſputed out of the Church of *England* into the Church of *Rome*, upon ſuch vain hopes of a more infallible certainty? for let him go where he will, if he be lead to *Rome* it ſelf by his own fallible Reaſon and Judgment, (which is the only Guide he has in diſputing) he will be the ſame fallible Creature that ever he was. But to repreſent this the more familiarly, let us hear a ſhort Conference between a ſturdy Proteſtant, and a new Convert.

Prot.

Prot. O, my old Friend! I am glad to meet you, for I have longed to know what change you find in your ſelf, ſince you are become an Infallible Believer.

Conv. I find, Sir, what I expected, very great eaſe and ſatisfaction of mind, ſince I am delivered from all doubtful Diſputes in ſuch an important concernment as the Salvation of my Soul, and have a firm and ſure Rock to truſt to, ſuch an Infallible Church as cannot err it ſelf, nor miſ-guide me.

Prot. This, I confeſs, is a very great advantage; and therefore as we have been formerly of the ſame Church and Communion, I would be glad to keep you company alſo in ſo advantageous a change. Pray therefore tell me, how you came to be ſo infallibly perſwaded of the Infallibility of your Church.

Conv. With all my heart; and I ſhall be very glad of ſuch company: and indeed there are ſuch powerful Reaſons for it, as I am ſure muſt convince ſo free and ingenuous a mind, as you always carry about with you. For Chriſt has promiſed to build his Church upon St. *Peter*, and that the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it----

Prot. Hold, good Sir! Reaſon! Are you got no farther than Reaſon yet? Will Reaſon ever make a man infallible? I have conſidered all the Reaſons that are uſed to this purpoſe, and know what to ſay to them, if that were our buſineſs; and the truth is, I have a great deal of unanſwerable Reaſon, to ſtay where I am; and am a little ſurprized, to think that you, or any man, ſhould leave the Church of *England* for want of Reaſon, or go to the Church of *Rome* for it: and therefore pray tell me the Secret, for there muſt be ſomething elſe to make Converts, beſides Reaſon.

Conv. Then I perceive you take me for a Knave, who

have changed my Religion for baſe ſecular Ends, without Reaſon.

Prot. You know that beſt; but that was not my meaning: but the reaſon of my Queſtion was, becauſe you changed for an infallible Faith. Now if you rely ſtill upon Reaſon, I don't ſee how your Faith is more infallible than mine: for I am as confident, as you can be, that I have as good Reaſons for my Faith, and in my opinion much better, than you have for yours.

Conv. I beg your pardon for that: I rely upon the Authority of an Infallible Church, you truſt to your private Reaſon.

Prot. And I beg your pardon, Sir: for I rely on the Authority of Scripture, which is as infallible as your Church.

Conv. But you rely on your own Reaſon for the Authority of Scripture, and thoſe particular Doctrines you draw from it.

Prot. And you rely on your own Reaſon and Judgment, for the Infallibility of your Church, and conſequently of all the Doctrines of it; and therefore your infallible Faith is as much reſolved into your own fallible Judgment, as the Proteſtant Faith is: ſo that the difference between us is not, that your Faith is infallible, and ours fallible; for they are both alike, call it what you will, fallible or infallible; but the Diſpute is, whether your Reaſon and Judgment, or ours, be beſt: and therefore if you think your Reaſon better than ours, you did well to change; but if you changed your Church, hoping to grow more infallible by it, you were miſerably miſtaken, and may return to us again: for we have more rational Certainty than you have, and you have no more infallible Certainty than we. You think you are reaſonably aſſured that your Church is infallible, and

then

then you take up your Religion upon truſt from your Church, without, and many times againſt Senſe and Reaſon, according as it happens; ſo that you have onely a general aſſurance of the Infallibility of your Church, and that no greater than Proteſtants pretend to in other caſes, *viz.* the certainty of Reaſon and Argument; but have not ſo much as a rational aſſurance of the truth of your particular Doctrines; that if you be miſtaken about the Infallibility of your Church, you muſt be miſerably miſtaken about every thing elſe, which you have no other evidence for. But now we are in general aſſured, that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and in particular are aſſured, that the Faith, which we profeſs, is agreeable to Scripture, or expreſly contained in it, and does not contradict either Senſe or Reaſon, or any other Principle of Knowledge. So that we have as much aſſurance of every Article of our Faith, as you have of the Infallibility of your Church; and therefore have at leaſt double and treble the aſſurance that you have. But if you know the Reaſons of your Converſion, I deſire to know of you, What made you think, that you wanted Certainty in the Church of *England?*

Conv. Becauſe with you every man is left to his own private Reaſon and Judgment, the effects of which, are very viſible in that infinite variety of Sects among you, which ſhews what an uncertain thing your Reaſon is, that ſo few judge alike of the power and validity of the ſame Reaſons.

Prot. And were you not ſenſible at the ſame time, that you were left to your own Reaſon and Judgment, when you turned Papiſt? Are you not ſenſible, that men do as little agree about your Reaſons for Infallibility, as they do about any Proteſtant Reaſons? Do not I know the Reaſons alledged by you for the Infallibility of your

your Church as well as you do: And do we not ſtill differ about them? And is not this as much an Argument of the uncertainty of thoſe Reaſons, which make you a Papiſt, that they cannot make me a Papiſt, as the diſſent of Proteſtants in other matters, is of the uncertainty of their Reaſons? Could you indeed be infallibly aſſured of the Infallibility of your Church, I grant you would have the advantage of us, but while you found your belief of Infallibility upon ſuch an uncertain Principle, as you think Reaſon is; if Certainty had been your onely aim, you might as well have continued in the Church of *England*, as have gone over to *Rome*.

This abundantly ſhews what a ridiculous thing it is for a Proteſtant to be diſputed out of his Church and Religion, upou a pretence of more infallible Certainty in the Church of *Rome*: Were they indeed inſpired with an infallible aſſurance, that the Church of *Rome* is Infallible, there might be ſome pretence for this; but an Infallibility which has no better foundation than mens private Reaſon, and private Judgment, is no Infallibility, but has all the ſame uncertainties, which they charge on the Proteſtant Faith, and a great deal more, becauſe it is not founded upon ſuch great and certain Reaſons.

The plain truth is, men may be taught from their Infancy to believe the Church Infallible, and when they are grown up, may take it, without examination, for a firſt and ſelf-evident Principle, and think this an infallible Faith: but men who underſtand the difference between the evidence of Reaſon and Infallibility, can never found an infallible Faith on Reaſon, nor think that a man who is reaſoned into the belief of the Infallibility of the Church, is more infallible in his Faith, than a Proteſtant is: And ſuch a man will ſee no reaſon to quit the Church of *England*, for the ſake of an infallible Faith; for though they

they had an infallible Guide, yet Reaſon cannot give them an infallible aſſurance of it, but can riſe no higher at moſt than a Proteſtant certainty.

2. It is impoſſible alſo by Reaſon to prove, that men muſt not uſe their own Reaſon and Judgment in matters of Religion. If any man ſhould attempt to perſwade you of this, ask him, why then he goes about to diſpute with you about Religion? whether men can diſpute without uſing their own Reaſon and Judgment? whether they can be convinced without it? whether his offering to diſpute with you againſt the uſe of your Reaſon, does not prove him ridiculous and abſurd? For if you muſt not uſe your Reaſon, why does he appeal to your Reaſon? And whether you ſhould not be as ridiculous and abſurd as he, if by his Reaſons and Arguments you ſhould be perſwaded to condemn the uſe of Reaſon in Religion? Which would be in the ſame act to do, what you condemn, to uſe your Reaſon when you condemn it. If you muſt not uſe your Reaſon and private Judgment, then you muſt not by any Reaſons be perſwaded to condemn the uſe of Reaſon; for to condemn is an act of Judgment, which you muſt not uſe in matters of Religion. So that this is a point which no man can diſpute againſt, and which no man can be convinced of by diſputing, without the reproach of ſelf-contradiction.

This is an honourable way of ſilencing theſe troubleſome and clamorous Diſputants, to let them ſee, that their Principles will not allow of Diſputing, and that ſome of their Fundamental Doctrines, which they impoſe upon the World, are a direct contradiction to all Diſputes, for the very admitting of a Diſpute, confutes them; and the meaneſt man may quickly ſay more in this Cauſe, than their greateſt Diſputants can anſwer.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Concerning the ſeveral Topicks of Diſpute.

SECT. I.

Concerning Arguments from Reaſon.

2. THE next Direction relates to the Topicks from which they Diſpute; which are, either Reaſon, Scripture, or the Authority of the ancient Fathers and Writers of the Chriſtian Church; for the infallible Authority of Popes, or General Councils, is the thing in diſpute between us, and therefore can prove nothing till that be firſt proved by ſomething elſe.

1. To begin then with Reaſon: Now we do allow of Reaſon in matters of Religion; and our Adverſaries pretend to uſe it, when they think it will ſerve their turn, and rail at it, and deſpiſe it, when it is againſt them.

Not that we make Natural Reaſon the Rule or the Meaſure of our Faith; for to believe nothing but what may be proved by Natural Reaſon, is to reject Revelation, or to deſtroy the neceſſity of it; For what uſe is there of a Revelation, or at leaſt what neceſſity of it, if nothing muſt be revealed, but what might have been known by Natural Reaſon without Revelation; or at leaſt what Natural Reaſon can fully comprehend, when it is revealed? But though we believe ſuch things, when they are revealed by God, which Natural Reaſon could never have taught us, and which Natural Reaſon does not ſee the depths and myſteries of; and therefore do not ſtint

our

our Faith, and confine it within the narrow bounds of Natural Reaſon; yet we uſe our Reaſon to diſtinguiſh a true from a counterfeit Revelation, and we uſe Reaſon to underſtand a Revelation; and we Reaſon and Argue from revealed Principles, as we do from the Principles of Natural Knowledge: As from that Natural Principle, that there is but one God, we might conclude, without a Revelation, that we muſt worſhip but one God: ſo from that revealed Doctrine of one Mediator between God and Man, we may as ſafely conclude, that we muſt make our Applications, and offer up our Prayers and Petitions to God, only by this one Mediator; and ſo in other caſes.

Now to direct Proteſtants how to ſecure themſelves from being impoſed on by the fallacious Reaſoning of *Roman* Prieſts: I ſhall take notice of ſome of the chief faults in their way of Reaſoning; and when theſe are once known, it will be an eaſie matter for men of ordinary underſtandings, to detect their Sophiſtry.

1. As firſt, we muſt allow of no Reaſon againſt the Authority of plain and expreſs Scripture: This all men muſt grant, who allow the Authority of Scripture to be ſuperiour to Natural Reaſon; for though Scripture cannot contradict plain, and neceſſary, and eternal Reaſons, *i. e.* what the univerſal Reaſon of Mankind teaches for a neceſſary and eternal Truth; yet God may command ſuch things, as we ſee no Natural Reaſon for, and forbid ſuch things as we ſee no Natural Reaſon againſt; nay, it may be, when we think there are plauſible Reaſons againſt what God commands, and for what he forbids: But in all ſuch caſes a Divine Law muſt take place againſt our uncertain Reaſonings; for we may reaſonably conclude, that God underſtands the Reaſons and Natures of things, better than we do.

As for inſtance, when there is ſuch an expreſs Law as, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve:* No reaſon in the World can juſtifie the Worſhip of any other Being, good or bad Spirits, beſides God, becauſe theres is an expreſs Law againſt it, and no Reaſon can take place againſt a Law. The like may be ſaid of the Second Commandment, *Thou ſhalt not make to thy ſelf any graven Image, nor the likeneſs of any thing which is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, thou ſhalt not bow down to them, nor worſhip them.* Which is ſo expreſs a Law againſt Image-Worſhip, that no Reaſon muſt be admitted for it. No man need to trouble himſelf to anſwer the Reaſons urged for ſuch Practices, for no Reaſons ought to be allowed, nor any Diſpute admitted againſt ſuch expreſs Laws.

This, I ſuppoſe, all men will grant: but then the difficulty is, What is an expreſs Law? For the Sence of the Law is the Law; and if there may be ſuch a Sence put on the words, as will reconcile theſe Reaſons with the Law, we muſt not ſay then, that ſuch Reaſons are againſt the Law, when, though they may be againſt the Law in ſome ſence, yet they are conſiſtent with other ſences of the Law; and it is moſt likely, that is the true ſence of the Law, which has the beſt reaſon on its ſide.

It muſt be confeſſed, there is ſome truth in this, when the words of the Law are capable of different ſences, and Reaſon is for one ſence, and the other ſence againſt Reaſon, there it is fit, that a plain and neceſſary Reaſon ſhould expound the Law: but when the Law is not capable of ſuch different ſences, or there is no ſuch reaſon as makes one ſence abſurd, and the other neceſſary, the Law muſt be expounded according to the moſt plain and obvious

obvious ſignification of the Words, though it ſhould condemn that, which we think, there may be ſome reaſon for, or at leaſt no reaſon againſt; for otherwiſe it is an eaſie matter to expound away all the Laws of God. To be ſure all men muſt grant, that ſuch Reaſons as deſtroy the Law, or put an abſurd or impoſſible ſence on it, are againſt the Law, and therefore muſt be rejected, how plauſible ſoever they appear: As for inſtance, Some there are, who to excuſe the Church of *Rome* from Idolatry in Worſhipping Saints, and Angels, and the Virgin *Mary*, poſitively affirm, that no man can be guilty of Idolatry, who worſhips one Supreme God; as a late Author expreſly teaches: *As for the Invocation of Saints, unleſs they Worſhip them as the Supreme God, the Charge of Idolatry is an idle word; and the Adoration it ſelf, which is given to them as Saints, is a direct Proteſtation againſt Idolatry, becauſe it ſuppoſes a Superiour Deity; and that ſuppoſition cuts off the very being of Idolatry.* Now, not to examine what force there is in this Reaſon, our preſent enquiry is onely, How this agrees with the firſt Commandment, *thou ſhalt have none other Gods before me?* before my Face, as it is in the *Hebrew:* Which ſuppoſes an acknowledgment of the Supreme God, together with other Gods; for otherwiſe, though they Worſhip other Gods, they do not do it before the Face of God, while they ſee him, as it were, preſent before them: to worſhip other Gods in the preſence of the Supreme God, or before his Face, as that Phraſe ſignifies, is to worſhip them together with him; and therefore this is well expreſſed by the Septuagint, by πλὴν ἐμοῦ, beſides me; which ſuppoſes that they worſhipped him too. And our Saviour expounds this Law by, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him onely ſhalt thou ſerve.* So that this Reaſon, That there can be no Idolatry, where the Lord

Reaſons for Abrogating the Teſt, p. 133.

Matth. 4. 10.

Jehovah is Worſhipped as the Supreme God, contradicts the very letter of this Law.

How then does this Author get rid of the firſt Commandment? Truly by laying it all aſide: for he gives this as the whole Sence of the firſt Commandment, That
Ibid. p. 80. God *enjoyns the Worſhip of himſelf, who, by his Almighty Power, had delivered them from their* Ægyptian *Bondage.* But is this all that theſe words, *Thou ſhalt have no other Gods before me,* ſignifies? The Worſhip of God indeed is ſuppoſed in them; but the expreſs words of the Law, are not for the Worſhip of the Lord *Jehovah,* but againſt the Worſhip of any other Gods, before him, or beſides him: But according to our new Expoſitor, this is no part of the Law, though according to the expreſs words, it is the principal, if not the whole meaning of it.

If this Argument be good, *viz.* That Idolatry is nothing elſe, but the Worſhip of other Beings beſides the Lord *Jehovah,* as Supreme Gods, then *other Gods,* in this Commandment, muſt ſignifie other *Supreme Gods*; and then the Commandment runs thus: Thou ſhalt have no other *ſupreme Gods* before me. Now this is a very abſurd ſence, becauſe it ſuppoſes, that men may Believe and Worſhip more Supreme Gods than one; for if there can be but one Supreme God, and by Gods in the Commandment, be meant Supreme Gods, then it is abſurd to forbid any man to have other Supreme Gods, becauſe no man can acknowledge two Supremes: It ſhould have been, Thou ſhalt not have any other *God* beſides me, not *Gods*: For thô it had been poſſible for them to have acknowledged ſome other God to be Supreme, and rejected the Lord *Jehovah* from being Supreme, yet they could not have other Supreme Gods. But it is evident, that God here forbids the Worſhip of a Plurality of Gods, of other Gods; and therefore they could not all be Supreme Gods.

But

But ſuppoſe it had been *any other God* in the ſingle number, yet to underſtand this of a Supreme God, is very abſurd; becauſe there is no other Supreme God, but the Lord *Jehovah*, and thoſe who worſhip but one Supreme God, worſhip him, and none elſe. For a Supreme God is not to be pointed at, is not to be diſtinguiſhed by his Perſon or Features, as one man is diſtinguiſhed from another: indeed a Prince may properly ſay to his Subjects, You ſhall own none but me for your King, becauſe they know his Perſon, and can diſtinguiſh him from all other men. But the *Jews* never ſaw God, nor any likeneſs or ſimilitude of him; they were not acquainted with his Perſon, nor could they diſtinguiſh him from other Gods, by any perſonal Characters; they knew him onely by his Notion and Character of the Supreme Being, who made the World and all things in it, and brought them by a mighty Hand out of the Land of *Ægypt*. Now does it not ſound very ſtrange, that the Supreme God, who is known onely by this Character, that he is Supreme, the Great Creator and Soveraign Lord of the World, ſhould make a Law, that we ſhould worſhip no other Supreme God but himſelf; when it is abſolutely impoſſible, that he who worſhips a Supreme and Soveraign God, ſhould worſhip any other God but himſelf, becauſe he alone is the Supreme God; and therefore thoſe who worſhip the Supreme God, under this Notion as Supreme, worſhip him, and no other Being. So that if we will make ſence of it, the meaning of the firſt Commandment is plainly this: Thou ſhalt not give Divine Honours to any other Beings, as to inferiour Gods, as the Idolatrous Practice of the World now is, which worſhips a great many things for Gods; but thou ſhalt worſhip onely one Supreme and Soveraign Being, the Maker and Soveraign Lord of

the

the World, which is I my ſelf, the Lord *Jehovah*, who brought thee out of the Land of *Ægypt*, out of the Houſe of Bondage. When the Supream God commands us to worſhip himſelf, the meaning muſt be, that we pay our Worſhip and Adorations to a Supream Being, conſidered as Supream; and he who worſhips ſuch a Supream Being, worſhips the true God, whom we can diſtinguiſh from falſe Gods only by this Character, that he is Supream: And when this Supream Being forbids us to worſhip any other Gods, it muſt ſignifie, that we muſt worſhip nothing which is not Supream, not that we muſt not believe that which is not Supream to be the Supream God; which would be ridiculous Nonſence, to command them not to own that Being for the Supream God, which they know not to be Supream.

But it may be ſaid, that the Heathens did worſhip ſome Beings, who were not the Supream God, as Supream, as this Author tells us, they did the Sun, though no body told him ſo, that I know of; for *Macrobius*, whom he cites in this Cauſe, does not ſay, that they worſhipped the Sun as Supream God, though he ſays that moſt of the Gods they worſhipped did ſignifie the Sun: But ſuppoſe the Sun were the chief Object of their Worſhip, and look'd on as the greateſt and moſt principal God, this does not prove that they worſhipped it as the Supream God: for theſe are two very different things to be worſhipped as the chief God, which ſuch a People have, and to be worſhipped under the Notion of Abſolutely Supream. Some Pagan Idolaters might worſhip a Creature as their chief and greateſt Deity, and might call it their great, their greateſt God, becauſe it is the greateſt God they have; their King and Prince of Gods, as Mr. *Selden* tells us, they called the Sun, as being the chief Planet who directed and governed the

Influen-

Influences of the reſt, not as the Maker of the World, as this Author aſſerts: But thoſe who direct their Worſhip to a Supream and Soveraign Being, conſidered as abſolutely Supream, infinite in all Perfections, the Maker and Governour of the whole World, can under this Notion worſhip no other but the Lord *Jehovah*, becauſe there is no other Supream God but he. Which ſhews, that the firſt Commandment is ſo far from forbidding the Worſhip of other Supream Gods, beſides the Lord *Jehovah*, that to make ſence of it, theſe *other Gods* muſt be expounded not of Supream, but inferiour Deities.; and it is ſo far from being the Notion of Idolatry, to worſhip other Supream Beings, beſides the Lord *Jehovah*, that it is Nonſence to ſuppoſe it. The true Notion of Idolatry in the firſt Commandment, is to worſhip ſome Inferiour Beings, together with the Supream God: It is a groſſer ſort of Idolatry, when men wholly neglect the Worſhip of the Supream God, and worſhip ſome Creature for their greateſt and chiefeſt God; and it is worſe ſtill, when men worſhip bad Spirits, than when they worſhip good Spirits, together with the Supream God: but it is evident, this Law condemns the Worſhip of any Inferiour Beings, though we do alſo worſhip the Supream God.

I ſhall give but one Inſtance more of this nature, and that is, the ſecond Commandment, which in ſuch expreſs words forbids the Worſhip of all Images, of what kind or nature ſoever. Now whatever Reaſons men may imagine there are for the Worſhip of Images, they can be of no force againſt an expreſs Law: And if theſe words be not expreſs, *Thou ſhalt not make to thy ſelf any graven image*, &c. I deſpair of ever ſeeing an expreſs Law. For had God intended by this Law to forbid the Worſhip of any Images, under what notion or reſpects ſoever,

ſoever, I would deſire to know what more ſignificant and comprehenſive words could have been uſed to have declared his mind, unleſs he had expreſly rejected thoſe falſe Interpretations, which the Patrons of Image-Worſhip have ſince invented, but were never thought on at that time.

Ibid. p. 30. The ſame Author, whom I have ſo often mentioned, having expounded the firſt Commandment only to a poſitive ſence, not to forbid the Worſhip of other Gods, but only to command the Worſhip of the Lord *Jehovah*, expreſly contrary to the very letter and plain ſence of the Law; agreeably to this, he makes the ſecond Commandment only to forbid the Worſhip of Idols or falſe Gods, and not that neither, unleſs they take them for the Supream Deity. His words are theſe:

In the next place, he forbids them the Worſhip of all Idols, i. e. *as himſelf deſcribes them, the likeneſs or ſimilitude of any thing that is in Heaven above, or in the Earth beneath, or in the Water under the Earth. A plain and indeed a logical definition this, that Idolatry is giving the Worſhip of the Supream God to any created, corporeal, or viſible Deity, or any thing that can be repreſented by an Image, which nothing but corporeal Beings can, and to ſuppoſe ſuch a Being the Supream Deity, is the only true and proper Idolatry.* Now let any man judge, whether this be not ſuch a gloſs as utterly deſtroys the Text.

As for his Worſhip of *Idols*, there is no ſuch word in the Law, but Images, Likeneſſes, Similitudes; but yet I will not diſpute about this, for an *Idol* does not only ſignifie a falſe God, but the Images either of falſe Gods, or falſe and corporeal Images of the true God. For *the*

135 Pſal. 15. *Idols of the Heathens*, as the Pſalmiſt tells us, *are ſilver, and gold, the work of mens hands*; which can relate to nothing but Images and Pictures: for corporeal Deities, which

which were made by God, are not the work of mens hands.

Now *Idolatry*, he ſays, *is giving the Worſhip of the Supream God to any created, corporeal, or viſible Deity, or any thing which can be repreſented by an Image, which nothing but corporeal Beings can.* Now how *plain and logical* ſoever this definition of Idolatry be, there is not a word of it in the Text. That forbids not the Worſhip of any created, corporeal, or viſible Deity, (which is forbid in the firſt Commandment) but only the Worſhip of *Images, the likeneſs of any thing in Heaven, or Earth, or in the Water under the Earth.* Now an Image differs from the thing whoſe Image it is. And it is a very ſtrange Expoſition of the ſecond Commandment, which forbids nothing elſe but the Worſhip of Images, to take no notice of the Worſhip of Images as forbid in it. According to this gloſs upon the Law, a man may worſhip ten thouſand Images and Pictures, ſo he do not worſhip any viſible and corporeal Deity, and not break this Commandment; which I think is not to give the ſence of the Law, but to expound it away.

But how does the worſhip of corporeal and viſible Deities, and nothing elſe, appear to be forbid by this Law, which mentions nothing at all but the likeneſs of things in Heaven, and Earth, and Water? Why, our learned Author imagines that no Images can be made, but onely for corporeal and viſible Deities, becauſe nothing but corporeal Beings can be repreſented by an Image: which Conceit is worth its weight in Gold; for it evidently proves, that there are no Pictures of God the Father, nor of the Trinity, in the Church of *Rome*, becauſe they are not corporeal Deities, and therefore cannot be repreſented by an Image: ſo miſerably have all Travellers been miſtaken, who tell us of a great many ſuch Pictures, and not very decent ones neither. There

can indeed be no Picture or Image to repreſent the likeneſs and ſimilitude of an incorporeal God, but yet the viſible parts of Heaven and Earth, and the viſible Creatures in them, may be repreſented by Images, and the Images of ſuch viſible things may be made the ſymbolical repreſentations of inviſible and incorporeal Deities; and ſuch inviſible and incorporeal Deities may be worſhipped in the likeneſs and ſimilitude of corporeal things; and then I am ſure to forbid the Worſhip of Images may ſignifie ſomething more than meerly to forbid the Worſhip of ſome viſible and corporeal Deities; for it may ſignifie the Worſhip of inviſible and incorporeal Deities, by viſible Images. But I perceive he imagined, that when God forbad them to make and worſhip the likeneſs of any thing in Heaven, in Earth, or in the Waters under the Earth, he only forbad the Worſhip of thoſe Beings, whoſe likeneſs or Images they made; whereas all men know, that thoſe very Idolaters who worſhipped theſe glorious parts of the Creation; did not repreſent them in their proper likeneſſes and figures; and that thoſe who worſhipped inviſible and incorporeal Beings, did it by material and viſible figures, which plainly proves, that when God forbad the Worſhip of Images, he had not reſpect meerly to viſible and corporeal Deities, but forbad Image-worſhip, whether they were the Images of viſible and corporeal, or of inviſible and incorporeal Deities.

Our Author durſt not ſay, (as the Roman Advocates do) that God in the ſecond Commandment only forbids the Worſhip of Images as Gods; which is ſuch glorious Nonſence, that he could not digeſt it: and therefore he ſuppoſes, that God does not forbid the Worſhip of Images at all, but only of ſuch corporeal Deities as may be repreſented by Images; which is a more gentile way

way of diſcarding the ſecond Commandment, than to leave it out of their Books of Devotions. But if he will ſtand to this, he condemns the Popiſh worſhip of dead Men and Women, for they are corporeal Deities; nay, of Chriſt himſelf, conſidered as a man, who might be repreſented by an Image or Picture. And thus I doubt he has done the Church of *Rome* no kindneſs at all: for this is a Demonſtration againſt the Worſhip of Saints, and the Virgin *Mary*, becauſe they are created, corporeal, and viſible Beings, who may be repreſented by Images; and he has thought of an Argument againſt Images, which neither the Scripture, nor the Church of *Rome*, know any thing of: The Church of *Rome* thinks it a good Argument for the Images of Chriſt, and the Saints, and the Virgin *Mary*, that they are repreſentable by Images and Pictures; and therefore there can be no hurt in ſuch Images: And the Scripture perpetually urges that Argument againſt Images, that the Deity cannot be repreſented by an Image; but neither of theſe Arguments are good, if our Author's Notion be good: For then to worſhip ſuch corporeal Beings, as may be repreſented by Images, is to worſhip corporeal Gods, which is Idolatry. And there is no danger in the Images of an incorporeal Deity, which cannot repreſent the God for which they are made; for whatever the Image be, this is not to worſhip a corporeal God, ſince we know him to be incorporeal, and therefore it is not Idolatry.

But he has one Salvo ſtill to excuſe thoſe from Idolatry, who worſhip even corporeal Gods, (for he ſpeaks not a word of worſhipping the Images of any Gods) that they are not Idolaters, unleſs they worſhip ſuch corporeal Gods, *ſuppoſing them to be the Supream Deity*; whereby he explains what he means by *giving*

the Worſhip of the Supream God to any created, corporeal, or viſible Deity; viz. to think ſuch a God to be the Supream God, is to worſhip it as Supream. And thus thoſe who worſhipped the Sun, not thinking him to be the Supream God, but the chief Miniſter of Providence under the Supream God, with reference to this Lower World, as moſt of the Sun Idolaters ſeemed to do, were not Idolaters. Nay, very few of the Philoſophers, though they worſhipped their Country Gods, were Idolaters, becauſe they either, did not believe them to be any Gods, or at leaſt not to be the Supream; as it is certain *Socrates*, and *Plato*, and *Tully*, and many others, did not.

But it is plain, that to worſhip the Supream God, is not meerly to ſuppoſe him to be Supream; for St. *Paul* tells us, that there were ſome, who knew God, but did not worſhip him as God: and therefore there is an external and viſible Worſhip, which is due to the Supream God, as well as the belief, that he is Supream. And if this Worſhip which is due to the Supream God, be given to any Being which we our ſelves do not believe to be Supream, we are Idolaters; and then though we do not believe the Gods we worſhip to be Supream, any kind or degree of Religious Worſhip (or which is uſed as an Act of Religion, not as common and civil Reſpects) is Idolatry. This Commandment brings it as low as meerly bowing to an Image, and then I doubt no other Act of Religious Worſhip can eſcape the Charge of Idolatry.

But though it is not my buſineſs to perſue this Author, I cannot paſs over the very next Paragraph, where he obſerves, *Though there may ſeem to be two ſorts of it:* (this Idolatry in worſhipping Corporeal Beings) *Firſt, either to worſhip a material and created Being, as the Supream Deity:*

Deity : Or ſecondly, to aſcribe any corporeal form or ſhape to the Divine Nature, yet in reſult, both are but one ; for to aſcribe unto the Supreme God any corporeal form , is the ſame thing as to worſhip a created Being , for ſo is every corporeal Subſtance. Which is a very wonderful Paragraph : for thus ſome of the Ancient Chriſtians, who believed God to be Corporeal, (as *Tertullian* himſelf did) but yet did not believe that he was created, but that he created all things, were as very Idolaters, as thoſe who worſhipped the Sun or Earth : And I would gladly know, who thoſe men are, who aſcribe unto the Supreme God, a Corporeal form, and yet think, that he was created. I am apt to think they differ a little in their Philoſophy from our Author, and did believe that a Corporeal Supreme Deity might be uncreated ; and then, I ſuppoſe, there may be ſome difference alſo between their worſhipping a Corporeal Created, and a Corporeal Uncreated God, at leaſt if mens Belief and Opinions of things makes a difference, as this Author muſt allow ; for, if I underſtand him, to worſhip a Corporeal Being, without believing it to be Supreme, does not make them Idolaters, but if they believe it Supreme, it does ; and by the ſame reaſon, thô to worſhip a Supreme Corporeal Created Deity (if that be not a contradiction) be Idolatry, yet to worſhip a Corporeal, which they believe to be an Uncreated Deity, is no Idolatry : For though I believe, with our Author, that all Corporeal Beings are created, yet, I ſuppoſe, thoſe who believed God to be Corporeal, did not believe, that every thing, that is Corporeal, was created.

So that the firſt and ſecond Commandments are very plain and expreſs Laws, the one forbidding the Religious Worſhip of all inferiour Beings, Corporeal, or Incorporeal, with or without the Supream God, or forbidding the Worſhip of all other Beings but the Supreme God ; the other

other forbidding the External and Viſible Worſhip of any material Images and Pictures: And though I am certain, there can be no good Arguments to juſtifie ſuch Practices as are forbid by theſe Laws, yet no Chriſtian need trouble himſelf to anſwer them, for be they what they will, it is a ſufficient anſwer to them, to ſay, They are againſt an expreſs Law.

2. Another Rule is, in matters of Faith, or in ſuch things as can be known onely by Revelation, Not to build our Faith upon any Reaſon, without the Authority of Scripture. That this may be the better underſtood, I ſhall briefly ſhew what theſe things are, which can be known onely by Revelation, and therefore which every Proteſtant ſhould demand a plain Scripture-proof for, before he believes them, whatever Reaſons are pretended for them: As,

1. Whatever depends ſolely upon the Will and Appointment of God, which God might do, or might not do, as he pleaſed. In ſuch caſes our onely inquiry is, What God has done? And this can be known onely by Revelation; for Reaſon cannot diſcover it, becauſe it depends not upon any neceſſary Reaſon, but on the free and arbitrary appointment of God: as St. *Paul* tells us, That as *no man knows the things of a man, but the ſpirit of man, that is in him; ſo no man knoweth the things of God, but the ſpirit of God:* That is, as no man can tell the ſecret thoughts and purpoſes of a man, nor how he will determine himſelf in matters of his own free Choice and Election: ſo what depends purely upon the Will of God, is known onely to the Spirit of God, and therefore can be made known to us onely by Revelation.

Many ſuch things there are in diſpute between us and the Church of *Rome*, which depend ſo intirely upon the Will of God, that they may be, or may not be, as God pleaſes. As for inſtance: No

No man, nor company of men can be Infallible, unleſs God beſtow Infallibility on them; for Infallibility is not a natural Endowment, but a ſupernatural Gift; and therefore no reaſon can prove, the Biſhop of *Rome*, or a General Council to be Infallible. God may make them Infallible if he pleaſes, and if he pleaſes, he may not do it: and therefore our only inquiry here is, What God has done? And this can be known only by Revelation.

Thus that the Church of *Rome* only, and thoſe Churches that are in Communion with her, ſhould be the Catholick Church, and the Biſhop of *Rome* the Oecumenical Paſtor, and the Center of Catholick Unity muſt depend wholly upon Inſtitution, for nothing but the Will and Appointment of God, can give this Preheminence and Prerogative to the Church and Biſhop of *Rome*, above all other Churches and Biſhops. No reaſon then can prove this without plain and expreſs Scripture to prove ſuch an Inſtitution.

Were there nothing in Scripture or Reaſon to prove, that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not a propitiatory Sacrifice for the Living and the Dead, yet no Reaſon can prove, that it is: For the vertue and acceptation of a Sacrifice, intirely depends upon the will and appointment of God, at leaſt ſo far, that no Sacrifice can be Propitiatory without it: And therefore there can be no other proof, that the Maſs is a propitiatory Sacrifice, but the declaration of God's Will and Inſtitution, that it ſhall be ſo.

2. Thoſe things alſo can be proved only by Scripture, which are done in the other World, which is an unknown and inviſible State to us, any farther than the Scripture has revealed it: and men may more reaſonably expect to find out, by the power of Reaſon, what is done every day

day in *China*, or the moſt remote and unknown parts of the Earth, than what is done in the other World. And then there are a great many things wherein you muſt reject all pretences to Reaſon, any farther than it is ſupported by plain and evident Scripture. As to give ſome inſtances of this alſo:

1. No reaſon can prove, that there is ſuch a place as Purgatory, for that is an inviſible place in the other World; if there be any ſuch place, no man living ever ſaw it; and then how can any man know, that there is ſuch a place, unleſs it be revealed? To attempt to prove that there is ſuch a place as Purgatory, meerly by Reaſon, is juſt as if a man, who had ſome general notion of an Inquiſition, but never had any credible information, that there actually was any ſuch place, ſhould undertake to prove, by Reaſon, that there is and muſt be ſuch a place as the Inquiſition; though he would happen to gueſs right, yet it is certain his Reaſons ſignified nothing; for ſome Countries have the Inquiſition, and ſome have not; and therefore there might have been no Inquiſition any where, how ſtrong ſoever the Reaſons for it might be thought to be. We may as well deſcribe, by the power of Reaſon, the World in the Moon, and what kind of Inhabitants there are there, by what Laws they live, what their Buſineſs, what their Pleaſures, and what their Puniſhments are, as pretend to prove, that there is a Purgatory in the next World, for they are both equally unknown to us; and if Reaſon cannot prove that there is ſuch a Place as Purgatory, nothing elſe which relates to Purgatory, can be proved by Reaſon.

2. Nor can we know what the ſtate of Saints in Heaven is, without a Revelation, for no man has been there to ſee: the ſtate of the other World is ſuch things as neither Eye hath ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into

into the Heart of man to conceive. And then I cannot underſtand how we ſhould know theſe things by Reaſon.

The Church of *Rome* teaches us to Pray to Saints, and to flie to their Help and Aid: And there are a great many things which a wiſe man would deſire to know, before he can think it fit to pray to them; which yet it is impoſſible to know, without a Revelation: as, Whether the Saints we direct our Prayers to, be in Heaven? Which is very fit to be known, and yet can certainly be known but of a very few of that vaſt number, that are worſhipped in the Church of *Rome*; the Apoſtles of Chriſt, and the Virgin *Mary*, we have reaſon to believe are in Heaven, and we may hope well of others, but we cannot know it: No man can ſee who is there, and bare hope, how ſtrong ſoever, is not a ſufficient foundation for ſuch a Religious Invocation of unknown Saints, who, after all our perſwaſions that they are in Heaven, may be in Hell, or at leaſt in Purgatory, where they want our Prayers, but are not in a condition to interceed for us.

Thus it is very neceſſary to know, what the power and authority of the Saints in Heaven is, before we pray to them; for it is to no purpoſe to pray to them, unleſs we know they can help us. The Council of *Trent* recommends to us the Invocation of Saints, as of thoſe who reign with Chriſt in Heaven, and therefore have power and authority to preſent our Petitions, and procure thoſe Bleſſings we pray for. And if I could find any ſuch thing in Scripture, it would be a good reaſon to pray to them; but all the Arguments in the World cannot prove this without a Revelation: they may be in Heaven, and not be Mediators and Advocates.

Thus, whatever their power and Authority may be, it

is to no purpoſe to pray to them, unleſs we are ſure, that they hear our Prayers; and this nothing but a Revelation can aſſure us of; for no natural Reaſon can aſſure us, that meer Creatures, as the moſt glorious Saints in Heaven are, can hear our ſoft, nay mental Prayers, at ſuch a vaſt diſtance, as there is between Heaven and Earth.

Such matters as theſe, which Reaſon can give us no aſſurance of, if they be to be proved at all, muſt be proved by Scripture; and therefore as the pretence of proving theſe things by Reaſon is vain, ſo no Proteſtant ſhould be ſo vain, as to trouble himſelf to anſwer ſuch Reaſons.

But you'll ſay, The Papiſts do pretend to prove theſe things by Scripture. I anſwer, So far it is very well; and I onely deſire our Proteſtant to keep them to their Scripture-Proofs, and to reject all their Reaſons; and then let them ſee, what they can make of it. As for Scripture-Proofs, they ſhall be conſidered preſently.

3. More particularly you muſt renounce all ſuch Reaſons, as amount to no more than ſome May-bes and Poſſibilities; for what only may be, may not be, and every thing that is poſſible, is not actually done. As for inſtance: When you ask theſe men, How you can be aſſured, that the Saints in Heaven can hear our Prayers? They offer to ſhew you by what ways this may be done: They may ſee all things in the Glaſs of the Trinity, and thereby know all things, that God knows. Which is but a may-be; and yet it is a more likely may-be, that there is no ſuch Glaſs as gives the Saints a comprehenſive view of all that is in God. Well, but God can reveal all the Prayers to the Saints, which are made to them on Earth. Very right! we diſpute not God's Power to do this, but deſire to know, whether he does

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it or not; and his bare power to do it, does not prove that: But the Saints in Heaven may be informed of what is done on Earth, by thoſe who go from hence thither, or by thoſe Miniſtring Angels who frequently paſs between Heaven and Earth: but this may not be too; and if it were, it would not anſwer the purpoſes of Devotion: for in this way of intercourſe the News may come too late to the Saints, to whom we pray, for the Saints to do us any good: as, ſuppoſe a man pray to the Virgin *Mary* in the hour of Death, or in a great Storm at Sea, the man may be dead, and Ship wrackt before the Virgin knows of his Prayers, and may carry the firſt news of it into the other World himſelf. Such kind of May-bes and Conjectures as theſe, are a very ſorry Foundation for an Infallible Church to build her Faith on.

4. You muſt reject alſo all ſuch Reaſons in Divine and Spiritual things, as are drawn from Earthy Patterns. A conſidering man would a little wonder, how a Papiſt ſhould ſo punctually determine what is done in the other World, without ſpeaking with any one who has ſeen it, and without having any Revelation about it, as I have already obſerved; but whoever conſiders many of their Arguments, will ſoon find that they make this World the Pattern of the next, and reaſon from Senſible to Spiritual things.

Thus the true Foundation of Saint-Worſhip is, that men judge of the Court of Heaven by the Courts of earthly Princes: The moſt effectual way to obtain any Requeſt of our Prince, is to addreſs our ſelves to ſome powerful Favourite; and they take it for granted, that all Saints and Angels in Heaven are ſuch Favourites, and can obtain whatever they ask; and therefore they pray very devoutly to them, and beg their Interceſſion

with God and their Saviour. Especially in earthly Courts the Queen Mother is supposed to have a powerful influence upon the young Prince her Son; and therefore they do not doubt but the Virgin *Mary*, the Mother of Christ, can do what she pleases with her Son; And since it is generally observed, that Women are more soft, and tender, and compassionate, than men, they hope to gain that by her Intercession, which He, who died for them, would not grant without it; and therefore they beg her to shew her self to be a Mother, that is, to take the Authority of a Mother upon her, and command her Son. Thus Princes and Great Men love to have their Pictures set up in publick places, and to have all civil Respects paid to them, which redounds to the honour of those whose Pictures they are; and therefore they imagine that this is as acceptable to Christ and the Saints, as it is to Men; as if the other World were nothing else but a new Scene of Sense and Passion.

Mankind is very apt to such kind of Reasonings as these; and indeed they can have no other, when they will undertake to guess at unseen and unknown things: But if there be any difference between the Court of Heaven and Earth, if pure Spirits, who are separated from Flesh and Sense, have other Passions and Resentments than Men have, that is, if we must not judge of spiritual things by Sense, of the Government of God by the Passions of men, then such Reasonings as these may betray us to absurd and foolish Superstitions, but are a very ill Foundation for any new and uncommanded Acts of Worship.

5. Never admit any Arguments meerly from the usefulness, conveniency, or supposed necessity of any thing, to prove that it is. As for instance: A Supream Oecume-

Oecumenical Biſhop, and an Infallible Judge of Controverſies, are thought abſolutely neceſſary to the Unity of the Church, and Certainty of Faith, and confounding of Schiſms and Hereſies. If there be not a Supreme Paſtor, there can be no Unity; if there be not an Infallible Judge, there can be no certainty in Religion; every man muſt be left to his own private Judgment, and then there will be as many different Religions, as there are Faces. Now if I thought all this were true, (as I believe not a word of it is) I ſhould onely conclude, that it is great pity that there is not an Univerſal Paſtor and Infallible Judge inſtituted by Chriſt; but if you would have me conclude from theſe Premiſes, *Ergo*, there is an Univerſal Biſhop and Head of the Church, and an Infallible Judge of Controverſies, I muſt beg your pardon for that; for ſuch Arguments as theſe do not prove, that there is ſuch a Judge, but only that there ought to be one, and therefore I muſt conclude no more from them. Indeed this is a very fallacious way of Reaſoning, becauſe what we may call uſeful, convenient, neceſſary, may not be ſo in it ſelf; and we have reaſon to believe it is not ſo, if God have not appointed what we think ſo uſeful, convenient, or neceſſary: which is a truer and more modeſt way of Reaſoning, than to conclude that God has appointed ſuch a Judge, when no ſuch thing appears, onely becauſe we think it ſo uſeful and neceſſary, that he ought to do it. Theſe Directions are ſufficient to Preſerve all conſidering Proteſtants from being impoſed on by the fallacious Reaſonings of Papiſts.

SECT.

SECT. II.

Concerning Scripture-Proofs.

2. LEt us now conſider their Scripture-Proofs, though it is not choice, but neceſſity, which puts them upon this Tryal: When they have good Catholicks to deal with, a little Scripture will ſerve the turn, but Hereticks will be ſatisfied with nothing elſe; and therefore in diſputing with them, they are forced to make ſome little ſhew and appearance of proving their Doctrines by Scripture; but they come very unwillingly to it, and make as much of a little, as may be. The truth is, there is Evidence enough, that they have no great confidence in the Scripture themſelves, and therefore do not deal honeſtly and fairly with poor Hereticks, when they make their boaſts of Scripture.

For did they believe that their Doctrines which they endeavour to prove from Scripture, were plainly and evidently contained in them, why ſhould they deny the People the liberty of reading the Scriptures? If the Scriptures be for them, why ſhould they be againſt the Scriptures? The common Pretence is, that thoſe who are unlearned, put very wild ſences upon Scripture, and expound it by their own fancies; which in many caſes indeed is too true: but why ſhould the Church of *Rome* be more afraid of this, than other Proteſtant Churches? If they think the Scripture is as much for them, as we think it is for us, why dare not they venture this as well as we? We are not afraid men ſhould read the Scripture, though we ſee what wild Interpretations ſome put on them, becauſe we are certain we can prove our Faith by Scripture, and are able to ſatisfie all honeſt men, who will

will impartially ſtudy the Scriptures, that we give the true ſence of them; and if they believed, they could do ſo too, why do they avoid this tryal, when ever they can? For though they admit People to diſpute from the Scripture in *England*, where they cannot help it, yet they will not allow them ſo much as to ſee the Scriptures in *Italy* or *Spain*, where they have power to hinder it: Nay they themſelves do in effect confeſs, that the peculiar Doctrines and Practices of their Religion, wherein they differ from all other Chriſtian Churches, cannot be proved by Scripture. And therefore to help them out, where the Scripture fails, they fly to unwritten Traditions, which they make of equal authority with the Scriptures themſelves; which they would never do, were they not convinced, that the Scriptures are not ſo plain on their ſide, as to ſatisfie any man, who has not already given himſelf up to the Church of *Rome* with an implicite Faith.

And therefore, before you enter into any debate about the ſence of any particular Texts of Scripture, and their way of proving their particular Doctrines from Scripture, ask them two Queſtions, without a plain Anſwer to which, it is to no purpoſe to diſpute with them out of Scripture.

Ask 1. Whether they will allow the Holy Scriptures to be a complete and perfect Rule of Faith; that no Chriſtian ought to receive any Doctrine for an Article of Faith, which cannot be proved from Scripture? This to be ſure they muſt not allow, unleſs they will reject the Council of *Trent*, which gives as venerable an Authority to Tradition, as to Scripture it ſelf: Since then they have two Rules, Scripture and Tradition; when they pretend to diſpute from Scripture, it is reaſonable to know of them, whether they will ſtand to Scripture, and reject

reject ſuch a Doctrine if it cannot be plainly proved out of Scripture: For if they will not ſtand to this, they give up their Cauſe, and there is no need to diſpute with them: For why ſhould I diſpute with any man from Scripture, who will not ſtand to the determination of Scripture? We Proteſtants indeed do own the Authority of Scripture; and what we ſee plainly proved out of Scripture, we muſt abide by: which is reaſon enough for us to examine the Scripture-proofs which are produced by our Adverſaries. But it is ſufficient to make them bluſh, if they had any modeſty, to pretend to prove their Doctrines from Scripture, when they themſelves do not believe them meerly upon the Authority of Scripture, and dare not put their Cauſe upon that iſſue; which gives a juſt ſuſpicion, that they are conſcious to themſelves, that their Scripture-proofs are not good, and ſhould make Proteſtants very careful, how they are impoſed on by them. To diſpute upon ſuch Principles as are not owned on both ſides, can eſtabliſh nothing, thô it may blunder and confound an Adverſary; it is onely a tryal of Wit, where the ſubtileſt Diſputant will have the Victory; and it is not worth the while for any man to diſpute upon theſe terms.

This is not to reject the Authority of Scriptures, becauſe the Papiſts reject it, which no Proteſtant can or will do, but it is an effectual way for men, who are not skilled in Diſputations, to deliver themſelves from the troubleſome Importunities of Popiſh Prieſts, when learned men, who can detect their Fallacies, are out of the way. Let them but ask them, Whether all the peculiar Doctrines of the Church of *Rome* can be proved by plain Scripture-evidence? If they ſay, they can; then they muſt reject the neceſſity of unwritten Traditions, and acknowledge the Scripture to be a complete and perfect

Rule

Rule of Faith. A point, which I believe, no underſtanding Prieſt will yield. If they ſay, they cannot; ask them, With what confidence they pretend to prove that from Scripture, which they confeſs is not in it? Why they go about to impoſe upon you, and to perſwade you to believe that upon the Authority of Scripture, which they themſelves confeſs, is not, at leaſt not plainly, contained in Scripture.

2. Ask ſuch Diſputants, who alledge the Authority of Scripture to prove their Popiſh Doctrines, How they themſelves know what the ſence of Scripture is, and how you ſhall know it? For it is a ridiculous undertaking to prove any thing by Scripture, unleſs there be a certain way of finding out the ſence of Scripture. Now there can be but three ways of doing this, either by an infallible Interpreter, or by the unanimous Conſent of Primitive Fathers, or by ſuch Humane means as are uſed to find out the ſence of other Books.

I. If they ſay, we muſt learn the ſence of Scripture from an infallible Interpreter: Tell them, this is not to diſpute, but to beg the Cauſe. They are to prove from Scripture, the Doctrines of the Church of *Rome*; and to do this, they would have us take the Church of *Rome*'s Expoſition of Scripture. And then we had as good take her word for all, without diſputing. But yet,

1. They know, that we reject the pretences of an infallible Interpreter: We own no ſuch infallible Judge of the ſence of Scripture. And therefore, at leaſt, if they will diſpute with us, and prove their Doctrines by Scripture, they muſt fetch their Proofs from the Scriptures themſelves, and not appeal to an infallible Interpreter, whom we diſown: Which is like appealing to a Judge in Civil matters, whom one of the contending Parties thinks incompetent, and to whoſe Judgment they will not

ſtand; which is never likely to end any Controverſie: and yet they cannot quit an infallible Interpreter, without granting, that we may underſtand the Scriptures without ſuch an Interpreter; which is to give up the Cauſe of Infallibility.

2. One principal Diſpute between us and the Church of *Rome*, is about this infallible Interpreter; and they know, that we will not own ſuch an Interpreter, unleſs they can prove from Scripture, that there is ſuch an one, and who he is. The inquiry then is, How we ſhall learn from Scripture, that there is ſuch an infallible Interpreter? that is, who ſhall Expound thoſe Scriptures to us, which muſt prove that there is an infallible Interpreter? if without an infallible Interpreter we cannot find out the true ſence of Scripture, how ſhall we know the true ſence of Scripture, before we know this infallible Interpreter? For an Interpreter, how infallible ſoever he be, cannot interpret Scripture for us, before we know him; and if we muſt know this infallible Interpreter by Scripture, we muſt at leaſt underſtand theſe Scriptures, which direct us to this infallible Interpreter, without his aſſiſtance. So that of neceſſity ſome Scriptures muſt be underſtood without an infallible Interpreter, and therefore he is not neceſſary for the Interpretation of all Scripture: And then I deſire to know, why other Scriptures may not be underſtood the ſame way, by which we muſt find out the meaning of thoſe Texts which direct us to an infallible Interpreter? There are a hundred places of Scripture, which our Adverſaries muſt grant, are as plain and eaſie to be underſtood, as thoſe: And we believe it as eaſie a matter to find all the other *Trent*-Articles in Scripture, as the Supremacy and Infallibility of the Biſhop of *Rome*. If ever there needed an infallible Interpreter of Scripture, it is to prove ſuch an infallible Inter-

Interpreter from Scripture; but upon this occaſion he cannot be had, and if we may make ſhift without him here, we may as well ſpare him in all other caſes.

3. Suppoſe we were ſatisfied from Scripture, that there is ſuch an infallible Interpreter, yet it were worth knowing, where his infallible Interpretation is to be found; for if there be ſuch an Interpreter who never Interprets, I know not how either they or we ſhall underſtand Scripture the better for him: Now, have either Popes or General Councils given us an authentick and infallible Expoſition of Scripture? I know of none ſuch: all the Expoſitions of Scripture in the Church of *Rome*, are writ by private Doctors, who were far enough from being infallible; and the buſineſs of General Councils, was not to expound Scripture, but to define Articles of Faith: and therefore we find the ſenſe of very few Texts of Scripture Synodically defined by any General Council; I think, not above four or five by the Council of *Trent*. So that after all their talk of an infallible Interpreter, when they undertake to expound particular Texts, and to diſpute with us about the ſenſe of them, they have no more Infallibility in this, than we have; for if they have an infallible Interpreter, they are never the better for him, for he has not given them an infallible Interpretation, and therefore they are forced to do as Proteſtants do, interpret Scripture according to their own skill and underſtanding, which, I ſuppoſe, they will not ſay, is infallible.

But you'll ſay, though the Church has not given us an infallible Interpretation of Scripture, yet ſhe has given us an infallible Expoſition of the Faith, and that is an infallible Rule for expounding Scripture. I anſwer, there is a vaſt difference between theſe two: for our diſpute is not about the ſenſe of their Church, but about the

ſence of the Scripture; we know what Doctrines their Church has defined, but we deſire to ſee them proved from Scripture: And is it not a very modeſt and pleaſant propoſal, when the Diſpute is, how their Faith agrees with Scripture, to make their Faith the Rule of expounding Scripture? Though, I confeſs, that is the only way I know of, to make their Faith and the Scriptures agree; but this brings the Scripture to their Faith, does not prove their Faith from Scripture.

II. As for expounding Scripture by the unanimous conſent of Primitive Fathers: This is indeed the Rule which the Council of *Trent* gives, and which their Doctors ſwear to obſerve; how well they keep this Oath, they ought to conſider. Now as to this, you may tell them, that you would readily pay a great deference to the unanimous Conſent of Fathers, could you tell how to know it; and therefore in the firſt place you deſire to know the agreement of how many Fathers makes an unanimous Conſent: for you have been told, that there have been as great variety in Interpreting Scripture among the ancient Fathers, as among our modern Interpreters; that there are very few, if any controverted Texts of Scripture, which are interpreted by an unanimous Conſent of all the Fathers. If this unanimous Conſent then ſignifie all the Fathers, we ſhall be troubled to find ſuch a Conſent in expounding Scripture; muſt it then be the unanimous Conſent of the greateſt number of Fathers? This will be a very hard thing, eſpecially for unlearned men to tell Noſes: we can know the Opinion onely of thoſe Fathers who were the Writers in every Age, and whoſe Writings have been preſerved down to us; and who can tell, whether the major number of thoſe Fathers who did not write, or whoſe Writings are loſt, were of the ſame mind with thoſe whoſe Writings we have?

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and why muſt the major part be always the wiſeſt and beſt men? and if they were not, the Conſent of a few wiſe men, is to be preferred before great numbers of other Expoſitors.

Again, ask them, whether theſe Fathers were Infallible or Traditionary Expoſitors of Scripture, or whether they expounded Scripture according to their own private Reaſon and Judgment: if they were Infallible Expoſitors, and delivered the Traditionary ſence and interpretation of Scripture, it is a little ſtrange, how they ſhould differ in their Expoſitions of Scripture, and as ſtrange how private Doctors and Biſhops ſhould in that Age come to be Infallible, and how they ſhould loſe it in this; for now Infallibility is confined to the Biſhop of *Rome*, and a General Council. If they were not Infallible Expoſitors, how comes their Interpretations of Scripture to be ſo ſacred, that it muſt not be oppoſed? Nay, how comes an Infallible Church to preſcribe ſuch a Fallible Rule of interpreting Scriptures? If they expounded Scripture according to their own Reaſon and Judgment, as it is plain they did; then their Authority is no more ſacred than their Reaſon is; and thoſe are the beſt Expoſitors, whether Ancient or Modern, whoſe Expoſitions are backed with the beſt Reaſons. We think it a great confirmation of our Faith, that the Fathers of the Church in the firſt and beſt Ages did believe the ſame Doctrines, and expound Scripture in great and concerning points, much to the ſame ſence that we do; and therefore we refuſe not to appeal to them, but yet we do not wholly build our Faith upon the Authority of the Fathers; we forſake them where they forſake the Scriptures, or put perverſe ſences on them; and ſo does the Church of *Rome* too, after all their boaſt of the Fathers, when they contradict the preſent *Roman*-Catholick Faith,

Faith, as they do very often, though I believe without any malicious deſign, becauſe they knew nothing of it.

However, ask them once more, whether that ſence which they give of thoſe Texts of Scripture, which are controverted between us and the Church of *Rome*, be confirmed by the unanimous conſent of all the ancient Fathers: whether, for inſtance, all the ancient Fathers did expound thoſe Texts, *Thou art Peter, and on this Rock will I build my Church*, and *feed my Sheep*, &c. of the perſonal Supremacy and Infallibility of *Peter* and his Succeſſors the Biſhops of *Rome*? Whether they all expounded thoſe words, *This is my Body*, of the Tranſubſtantiation of the Elements of Bread and Wine into the natural Fleſh and Bloud of Chriſt? and thoſe words, *Drink ye all of this*, to ſignifie, Let none drink of the Cup but the Prieſt who conſecrates? and ſo in other Scriptures. If they have the confidence to ſay, that all the Fathers expounded theſe and ſuch-like Scriptures, as the Doctors of the Church of *Rome* now do, tell them, you have heard and ſeen other Expoſitions of ſuch Scriptures cited from the ancient Fathers by our Divines, and that you will refer that cauſe to them, and have it tried whenever they pleaſe.

III. There is no other way then left of underſtanding Scripture, but to expound it as we do other Writings; by conſidering the ſignification and propriety of words, and phraſes, the ſcope and context of the place, the reaſons of things, the Analogie between the Old and New Teſtament, and the like: When they diſpute with Proteſtants, they can reaſonably pretend to no other way of expounding Scripture, becauſe we admit of no other; and yet if they allow of this, they open a wide Gap for all Hereſies to come into the Church; they give up the Authority of the Church, and make every man his own

own Pope, and expoſe themſelves to all the ſenceleſs Rallery of their admired *Pax Vobis*. By this they confeſs, that the Scripture may be underſtood by Reaſon, that they can back their Interpretations with ſuch powerful Arguments, as are able to convince Hereticks, who reject the Authority of an infallible Interpreter: and then they muſt unſay all their hard Sayings againſt the Scriptures, That *they are dark and obſcure dead Letters, unſenced Characters, meer figured Ink and Paper*; they muſt recant all their Rallery againſt expounding Scripture by a private Spirit, and allowing every man to judge of the ſence of it, and to chuſe what he pleaſes: for thus they do themſelves when they diſpute with Hereticks about the ſence of Scripture; and I am pretty confident, they would never ſpeak againſt Scripture nor a private Spirit more, if this private Spirit would but make us Converts; but the miſchief is, a private Spirit, if it have any tincture of Sence and Reaſon, ſeldom expounds Scripture to a Roman-Catholick ſence.

So that in truth it is a vain, nay a dangerous thing for Papiſts to diſpute with Proteſtants about the ſence of Scripture; for it betrays the Cauſe of the Church, and vindicates the Scriptures and every mans natural Right of judging from the Uſurpations and Encroachments of a pretended Infallibility; but yet diſpute they do, and attempt to prove their Doctrines from Scripture. And becauſe it is too large a task for this preſent Undertaking, to examine all their Scripture-Proofs, I ſhall only obſerve ſome general faults they are guilty of, which whoever is aware of, is in no danger of being impoſed on by their Pretences to Scripture: and I ſhall not induſtriouſly multiply Particulars, for there are ſome few palpable miſtakes, which run through moſt of their Scripture-Proofs.

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1. As firſt, many of their Scripture-Proofs are founded upon the likeneſs of a word or phraſe, without any regard to the ſence and ſignification of that word in Scripture, or to the matter to which it is applied: As for inſtance, There is not a more uſeful Doctrine to the Church of *Rome*, than that of unwritten Traditions, which are of equal Authority with the Scriptures; for were this owned, they might put what Novel Doctrines they pleaſed upon us, under the venerable name of ancient and unwritten Traditions. Well, we deny that there are any ſuch unwritten Traditions, which are of equal Authority with the Scripture, ſince the Canon of Scripture was written and perfected, and deſire them to prove that there are any ſuch unwritten Traditions. Now they think it ſufficient to do this, if they can but find the word Tradition in Scripture; and that we confeſs they do in ſeveral places: for Tradition ſignifies only the delivery of the Doctrine of the Goſpel, which we grant was not done perfectly in writing, when thoſe Epiſtles were written, which ſpeak of Traditions, 1 *Theſſ.* 2. 15. *by word*, as well as by *Epiſtle*. But becauſe the whole Doctrine of the Goſpel was not written at firſt, but delivered by word of mouth, does it hence follow, that after the Goſpel is written, there are ſtill unwritten Traditions of equal Authority with the Scripture? This is what they ſhould prove; and the meer naming of Traditions in Scripture, before the Canon was perfected, does not prove this: for all men know, that the Goſpel was delivered by word of mouth, or by unwritten Tradition, before it was written; but this does by no means prove, that there are unwritten Traditions, after the Goſpel was written. To prove this, they ſhould ſhew us where it is ſaid, that there are ſome Traditions which ſhall never be written, that the Rule of Faith ſhall always

ways conſiſt partly of written, partly of unwritten Traditions.

Thus we know how zealous the Church of *Rome* is for their Purgatory-fire, wherein all men, who are in a ſtate of Grace, or delivered from the guilt of their ſins, muſt yet undergo that puniſhment of them, which has not been ſatisfied for by other means. As profitable a Doctrine as any the Church of *Rome* has, becauſe it gives great authority to Sacerdotal Abſolution, and ſets a good price upon Maſſes for the Dead, and Indulgences: and yet the beſt proof they have for this, is that Fire mentioned, 1 *Cor.* 3. 13, 14, 15. *Every mans work ſhall be made manifeſt: for the day ſhall declare it, becauſe it ſhall be revealed by fire, and the fire ſhall declare every mans work of what ſort it is.—If any mans work ſhall be burnt, he ſhall ſuffer loſs: but he himſelf ſhall be ſaved, but ſo as by fire.* Now here is mention of Fire indeed; but how does it appear to be the Popiſh Purgatory? Suppoſe it were meant of a material Fire, thô that does not ſeem ſo proper to try good or bad Actions, a true and Orthodox or Heretical Faith, yet this Fire is not kindled till the Day of Judgment, which is eminently in Scripture called *the day*, and is the only day, we know of in Scripture, which ſhall *be revealed by fire*, when the *Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire*, 2 Theſſ. 1. 7, 8. So that here is nothing but the word Fire, applied to another Fire, than St. *Paul* ever thought on, to prove a Popiſh Purgatory.

Thus they make Confeſſion to a Prieſt ordinarily neceſſary to obtain the Forgiveneſs of our ſins; and have no better Scripture-Proofs for it, but that we are often commanded to confeſs our ſins, ſometimes to God, and ſometimes to one another, but never to a Prieſt.

They have made a Sacrament of Extream Unction,

wherein the sick Person is anointed for the Forgiveness of Sins; and though a Sacrament ought to have the most plain and express Institution, both as to the matter, and form, and use, and end of it, yet the only Proofs they produce for this, is the Disciples working Miraculous Cures by Anointing the Sick with Oyl, 6 *Mark* 13. which methinks is a little different from the Sacrament of extream Unction, which is not to cure their sickness, but to forgive their sins; and St. *James* his Command, *Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oyl in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.* Where anointing with Oyl, joyned with fervent Prayer, is prescribed as a means of restoring the sick person to health again; and therefore is not the Popish Extream Unction, which is to be administred onely to those who are dying: And though St. *James* adds, *And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him*; yet, 1. This is not said to be the effect of Anointing, but of the fervent Prayer: and 2. This very Forgiveness of Sins does not refer to a plenary Pardon of sins in the other World, but signifies the removal of the visible and sensible punishments of Sin, in restoring the sick Person to health again. That though such sickness was inflicted on him for his sins, and possibly were the effects of Church-censures, which in those days were confirmed and ratified by bodily punishments, yet upon his Reconciliation to the Church, and the Prayers of the Elders, and the Ceremony of Anointing, he should be restored to health again, which was an external and visible Remission of his sins, and should be a plenary Pardon, if he brought forth the true and genuine fruits of Repentance: This is very natural,

6 James 14, 15.

and

and very agreeable to the ſcope and deſign of the Text, and differs as much from the Popiſh Extream Unction, as their greateſt Adverſaries could wiſh. Such kind of Proofs as theſe, are meerly the work of Fancy and Imagination, and can impoſe upon no man who will but attend to the different uſe and ſignification of words.

2. Another grand fault our Roman Adverſaries are guilty of is, that their Scripture-proofs are always very lame and imperfect, that is, that they never prove their whole Doctrine from Scripture, but only ſome little part of it: They draw very fine and artificial Schemes, and if they can find ſome little appearance in Scripture to countenance any one part of it, they take that for a Proof of the whole. As for inſtance:

Thus they tell us, that Chriſt made *Peter* the Prince of the Apoſtles, and the Head of the Univerſal Church, his own Vicar upon Earth; and that the Biſhops of *Rome*, who are St. *Peter*'s Succeſſors, ſucceed not only to his Chair, but to all the Rights and Prerogatives of St. *Peter*; and therefore the Biſhop of *Rome* alſo is the Head of the Church, the Oecumenical Paſtor, who neither wants St. *Peter*'s Keys nor Sword. This is a very notable point, if it were well proved; but as I obſerved before, this being a matter of pure Inſtitution, which depends wholly upon the Will of God, it can be proved only by Scripture: How much then of this do they pretend to prove from Scripture? Why, they will prove by Scripture, that St. *Peter* was the Prince of the Apoſtles, becauſe Chriſt ſaid unto him, *Thou art Peter*, and *on this Rock will I build my Church*: and *I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*; and *feed my Sheep*; which indeed are lamentable Proofs, for the ſame Power was given to all the Apoſtles, 20 *John* 21, 22, 23. *Then ſaid Jeſus unto them, Peace be unto you, as my Father ſent*

me, even ſo ſend I you, all of you; and therefore not one in ſubjection to another, but all with equal Power: *And when he had ſaid this, he breathed on them, and ſaith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt; whoſoever ſins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoſoever ſins ye retain, they are retained.* Accordingly on the day of Pentecoſt the Holy Ghoſt fell on them all, they were all endowed with the Gift of Tongues, and Miracles, and Propheſie; they all had the ſame Infallible Spirit, and therefore needed no ſuperiour Head over them: They were to be ſeparated into all parts of the World, where they could have no Communication with each other, and therefore could have no Univerſal Head. The Hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles gives not the leaſt intimation of any ſuch Superiority, which either St. *Peter* challenged, or the other Apoſtles paid him; which are ſtrong Preſumptions againſt ſuch a Supremacy of St. *Peter*: and I ſuppoſe they themſelves will grant, that all the reſt of the Apoſtles were as Infallible as he.

But ſuppoſe we ſhould grant them, that St. *Peter* was the chief of the Apoſtles, and had a kind of Primacy not of Government, but Order, how do they prove from Scripture, that the Biſhop of *Rome* ſucceeds in all the Rights and Prerogatives of St. *Peter*? for unleſs this be proved, whatever Prerogative St. *Peter* had, it ſignifies nothing to them: and yet this cannot be proved, but by inſtitution; for though Chriſt had beſtowed a Primacy on St. *Peter*, yet unleſs he expreſly grant it to his Succeſſors too, nay to his Succeſſors in the See of *Rome*, his Primacy, as being a perſonal Prerogative, muſt die with his Perſon: As a Prince may grant a Priority to perſons in the ſame Office and Power, may make a firſt Colonel, or a firſt Captain, but if theſe men to whom the precedency is given, die or are removed, thoſe who ſucceed in their Office and Power,

to

to the ſame Regiment or Company, do not therefore ſucceed to their Priority too; for this does not belong to their Office, but to their Perſons; and the King may give the Priority again to whom he pleaſes, or appoint them to ſucceed in courſe, according to their admiſſion into ſuch Offices. And by the ſame reaſon, the Primacy of the *Roman* Biſhops, who are St. *Peter*'s Succeſſors, does not follow from the Primacy of St. *Peter*, unleſs they can ſhew, that Chriſt has given them the Primacy alſo, as well as St. *Peter*; and this muſt be proved from Scripture, becauſe it is matter of Inſtitution, and no Arguments in the World can prove any thing, which depends ſolely upon an Inſtitution, without proving the Inſtitution: But this the *Roman* Doctors never pretend to, for they know, that there is not one word in Scripture about it; and nothing but the Authority of Scripture can prove a Divine Inſtitution. So that could they prove the Primacy of St. *Peter* from Scripture, they prove but half their Point, and that the moſt inconſiderable half too, for it does them no good. And therefore when they make a great noiſe about St. *Peter*'s Primacy and Prerogatives, never trouble your ſelves to diſpute that Point with them, which is nothing to the purpoſe; but require them to prove, from Scripture, that the Biſhop of *Rome*, as St. *Peter*'s Succeſſor, is appointed by Chriſt to be the ſupream Oecumenical Biſhop, and the Prince of all Biſhops. And if you ſtick here, as in reaſon you ought, there is an end of that Controverſie.

Thus there is nothing the Church of *Rome* makes a greater noiſe about, than Infallibility, though they are not agreed where to place this Infallibility, whether in the Pope or a General Council: But let it be where it will, this being a matter of Inſtitution, muſt be proved by Scripture: how then in the firſt place do they prove the

the Pope to be Infallible? That they think is very plain, becauſe Chriſt ſays, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.* But how does this prove, that the Biſhop of *Rome* is Infallible? For here is not one word of the Biſhop of *Rome*. Yes, this proves St. *Peter* to be infallible, who was afterwards Biſhop of *Rome*, and therefore all his Succeſſors are infallible too. Now that St. *Peter* was infallible, as all the other Apoſtles were, we readily grant; though, I think, this Text does not prove it: But does this prove the Biſhop of *Rome*'s Infallibility? Juſt as St. *Peter*'s Primacy proves the Pope to be the Oecumenical Primate: They themſelves muſt grant, that an infallible Apoſtle may have a fallible Biſhop for his Succeſſor; or elſe they muſt either deny, that the reſt of the Apoſtles, as well as St. *Peter*, were infallible, or they muſt grant, that all the Apoſtles Succeſſors, that is, all the Biſhops, who ſucceeded any of the Apoſtles in their Sees, muſt be as infallible as the Biſhops of *Rome*, who ſucceeded St. *Peter*; and then there will be ſo much Infallibility, that it will be worth nothing: If then there be not a natural and neceſſary entail of Infallibility upon the Succeſſors of infallible Apoſtles, they muſt ſhew us an expreſs Inſtitution, which makes the Succeſſors of *Peter* at *Rome* infallible. And let our Proteſtant demand this, before he owns the Infallibility of the Pope of *Rome*, and then, I believe, they will not think him worth Converting.

Thus as for thoſe who place Infallibility in a General Council, demand a Scripture-proof of it, that they would produce the General Council's Charter for Infallibility: This they can't do; but they ſay the Church is infallible, and the General Council is the Church Repreſentative, and therefore a General Council muſt be infallible too.

So

So that here are ſeveral things for them to prove, and to prove by Scripture too; (for there is no other way of proving them) before they can prove the Infallibility of General Councils: As, 1. That the Church is Infallible. 2. That a General Council is the Church Repreſentative. 3. That the Church Repreſentative, is that Church to which the Promiſe of Infallibility is made. And then they might conclude, that a General Council, as being the Church Repreſentative, is Infallible. Now inſtead of proving every particular of this by Scripture, (as they muſt do, if they will prove by Scripture, that General Councils are Infallible) they pretend to prove no more than the firſt of the three, that the Church is Infallible; and that very lamely too, as may appear more hereafter: and then they take all the reſt for granted, without any proof: which is juſt as if a man, who in order to prove his Title to an Eſtate, is required to prove, that this Eſtate did anciently belong to his Family, that it was entailed upon the Heir Male, that this entail was never cut off, nor the Eſtate legally alienated, and that he alone is the true ſurviving Heir; ſhould think it enough to prove only the firſt of theſe, that the Eſtate did anciently belong to his Family; which it might have done, and yet not belong to it now, or if it did ſtill belong to it, he may not be the true Heir.

Thus if we conſider what it is they teach about Purgatory, we ſhall quickly perceive, how little it is, they pretend to prove of it: they tell us, that there is a Purgatory-fire after this life, where men undergo the puniſhment of their ſins, when the fault is pardoned: that the Church has Power, out of her ſtock of Merits, which conſiſts of the ſupererogating Works of great and eminent Saints, to grant Pardons & Indulgences to men while they live, to deliver them from ſeveral thouſand years puniſhment,

ment, which is due to their ſins in Purgatory; that the Souls in Purgatory may be releaſed out of it by the Prayers, and Alms, and Maſſes of the living; which is the very life and ſoul of this Doctrine of Purgatory: Now of all this, they pretend to prove no more from Scripture, but that there is a Purgatory-fire after this Life; and how they prove it, you have already heard: But that either Penances or Pilgrimages, and other extraordinary Acts of Devotion, while we live, or the Pope's Pardons and Indulgences, can either remit or ſhorten the pains of Purgatory; or that the Prayers and Alms of our living Friends, or Maſſes ſaid for us by mercenary Prieſts, can deliver us out of Purgatory, which we are principally concerned to know, and without which, Purgatory will not enrich the Prieſts, nor the Church; this they never attempt, that I know of, to prove by Scripture: Whether there be a Purgatory or not, in it ſelf conſidered, is a meer ſpeculative point, and of no value: But could they prove, that the Pope has the Keys of Purgatory, and that Alms and Maſſes will deliver out of Purgatory; this were worth knowing, and is as well worth proving as any Doctrine of the Church of *Rome*, for there is nothing they get more by. But if you will not believe this, till they produce a Scripture-Proof of it, you may let them diſpute on about the place of Purgatory, and keep your Money in your Pocket. Thus it is in moſt other caſes, if you take their whole Doctrine together, and demand a Proof of every part of it, and not take a Proof of ſome little branch of it, for a Proof of the whole, you will quickly find, that they will not be ſo fond of diſputing, as ſome of them now are.

3. Another way our *Roman* Adverſaries have of proving their Doctrines from Scripture is, inſtead of plain and poſitive Proofs, to produce ſome very remote and in-

evident

evident conſequences from Scripture, and if they can but hale a Text of Scripture into the premiſes, whatever the concluſion be, they call it a Scripture-Proof. There are infinite Inſtances of this, but I can only name ſome few.

Thus they prove the perpetual Infallibility of the Church, becauſe Chriſt promiſes his Diſciples to be with them *to the end of the world*, 28 *Matth.* 20. which promiſe cannot be confined to their perſons, for they were to die long before the end of the World, and therefore muſt extend to their Succeſſors. Suppoſe that, and does Chriſt's being with them, neceſſarily ſignifie, that he will make them Infallible? Is not Chriſt with every particular Church, with every particular Biſhop, nay with every particular good Chriſtian, and muſt they all be Infallible then?

Thus Chriſt promiſes that the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt his Church; *Ergo*, the Church is Infallible; for if Error and Hereſie prevails againſt the Church, the Gates of Hell prevail againſt it: And I add, if Sin and Wickedneſs prevail againſt the Church, the Gates of Hell prevail againſt it; *Ergo*, the Church is Impeccable, and cannot ſin; which is to the full as good a conſequence as the other: And therefore the Gates of Hell prevailing, can neither ſignifie the meer prevalency of Errors or Sin in the Church, but ſuch a prevalency as deſtroys the Church; and this ſhall never be, becauſe Chriſt has promiſed it ſhall never be; and it may never be, though the Church be not Infallible; and therefore this does not prove Infallibility.

Thus they prove there is ſuch a place as Purgatory, where Sins are forgiven and expiated, becauſe our Saviour ſays, That the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, ſhall neither be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come,

Matt. 12. 32. and therefore there are ſome Sins which are forgiven in the next World, becauſe there is a ſin which ſhall not be forgiven there. Now not to conſider the ordinary uſe of ſuch Phraſes to ſignifie no more, than it ſhall never be, without diſtinguiſhing between what is to be done in this World, and what in the next; nay, not to conſider how contrary this is to their own Doctrine of Purgatory, that men who go to Purgatory have all their Sins already forgiven, though they muſt ſuffer the puniſhment of them there; which how abſurd ſoever it is, yet ſhews, that Purgatory is not a place of forgiving Sins; and therefore cannot be meant by our Saviour in thoſe words; yet ſuppoſing all they would have, that there ſhall be ſome Sins forgiven in the next World, which are not forgiven in this; How does this prove a Popiſh Purgatory, where Souls endure ſuch torments as are not inferiour to thoſe of Hell it ſelf, excepting their duration? That ſome Sins ſhall be forgiven in the next World, I think, does not very evidently prove, that men ſhall be tormented, it may be for ſeveral Ages, in the Fire of Purgatory.

Thus they prove the neceſſity of Auricular Confeſſion to a Prieſt, from the power of Judicial Abſolution. Chriſt has given the Prieſt power to forgive Sins, and hereby has made him a Judge, to retain or remit Sins, to abſolve and inflict Penances. Now a Judge cannot judge right, without a particular knowledge of the Fact, and all the circumſtances of it; and this the Prieſt cannot know without the confeſſion of the Penitent: and therefore as Prieſts have authority to abſolve, ſo a Penitent, who would be abſolved, muſt of neceſſity confeſs. But now I ſhould think it a much better conſequence, that the Prieſt has not ſuch a judicial authority of Abſolution, as requires a particular confeſſion of the Penitent, becauſe

Chriſt

Chriſt has no where commanded all men to confeſs their Sins to a Prieſt, than that the Prieſt has ſuch a judicial Authority, and therefore all men muſt confeſs to a Prieſt: for though our Saviour does give power to his Apoſtles to remit and retain ſins, yet thoſe words do not neceſſarily ſignifie a judicial Authority to forgive Sins, or if it did, it may relate onely to publick Sins, which are too well known without a private confeſſion; or however, it is not the particular knowledge of the Sin, with all the circumſtances of it, but the marks and characters of true Repentance for publick or ſecret Sins, which is the beſt rule and direction whom to abſolve; and therefore there is no need of a particular Confeſſion to this purpoſe.

But the Sophiſtry of this is moſt palpable, when they draw ſuch conſequences from one Text of Scripture, as directly contradict other plain and expreſs Texts. Thus becauſe St. *Peter* tells us, That there are many things hard to be underſtood, in St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, *which they that are unlearned and unſtable wreſt, as they do alſo the other ſcriptures to their own deſtruction*, 2 Pet. 3. 16. From hence they would conclude, that People ought not to be allowed to read the Bible: as if St. *Peter* had intended to forbid them to read thoſe Epiſtles, which St. *Paul* had written to them; nay, to read this very Epiſtle which he himſelf now ſent to them: For theſe Epiſtles which were ſent to the Churches, that they might be read by them, make a conſiderable part of the New Teſtament, which the People muſt not be allowed to read now. But ſetting aſide this, this conſequence that the People muſt not read the Bible, is directly contrary to a great many other Texts, which expreſly command them to read, and ſearch, and ſtudy, and meditate on the Laws of God, and the Holy Scriptures, as every body knows. I confeſs it amazes me to hear men argue at this rate: when they can-

not produce any one Text which forbids People to read the Scriptures, and there are a great many expreſs commands, that they ſhould read the Scriptures, they think it ſufficient to oppoſe againſt all this Authority, a conſequence of their own making, and a very abſurd one too, and call this a Scripture-proof.

I would not be thought wholly to reject a plain and evident conſequence from Scripture; but yet I will never admit of a meer conſequence to prove an Inſtitution, which muſt be delivered in plain terms, as all Laws ought to be; and where I have no other proof, but ſome Scripture-conſequences, I ſhall not think it equivalent to a Scripture-proof: if the conſequences be plain and obvious, and ſuch as every man ſees, I ſhall not queſtion it; but remote, and dubious, and diſputed conſequences, if we have no better evidence, to be ſure are a very ill foundation for Articles of Faith. Let our Proteſtant then tell ſuch Diſputants, that for the Inſtitution of Sacraments, and for Articles of Faith, he expects plain poſitive Proofs: that as much as the Proteſtant Faith is charged with uncertainty, we deſire a little more certainty for our Faith, than meer inferences from Scripture, and thoſe none of the plaineſt neither.

4. Another falſe pretence to Scripture-proofs is, to clap their own ſenſe upon the words of Scripture, without any regard to the uſe and propriety of words, to the circumſtances of the place, to the reaſon and nature of things; and to call this a Scripture-proof of their Doctrine, when their Doctrines do not naturally grow there, but are only engrafted by ſome cunning Artiſts, upon a Scripture-ſtock. I ſhall give you onely one inſtance of this, their Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation.

As for Tranſubſtantiation, they teach, that the Elements of Bread and Wine are converted into the natural Fleſh

Fleſh and Bloud of Chriſt, which was born of the Virgin *Mary*: That after Conſecration there is nothing of the ſubſtance of Bread and Wine, but the Accidents ſubſiſt without a ſubſtance: That the natural Body of Chriſt his Soul and Divinity, are preſent under the ſpecies of Bread; nay, that whole Chriſt, Fleſh and Bloud, is under the ſpecies of Bread, and in every particle of it, and under the ſpecies of Wine, and every drop of it: That the Body of Chriſt is not broken, nor his Bloud ſhed in the Sacrament, but only the ſpecies of Bread and Wine, which are nothing: That it is only this Nothing which we eat and drink in the Sacrament, and which goes down into our ſtomachs, and carries whole Chriſt down with it. Now this Doctrine ſounds ſo very harſh, is ſo contrary to all the Evidence of our Senſes, and has ſo many Abſurdities and Contradictions to Reaſon, that it ought to be very plainly proved from Scripture in every part of it: for if a man might be perſwaded to renounce his Senſes and Reaſon to believe Scripture, yet it ought to be equally evident to him at leaſt, that Scripture is for it, as it is, that Senſe and Reaſon is againſt it: and yet there is not one word in Scripture to prove any one part of this Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation; neither that the natural Fleſh and Blood of Chriſt is in the Sacrament, nor that the ſubſtance of Bread and Wine does not remain after Conſecration, nor that the Accidents of Bread and Wine, ſuch as colour, ſmell, taſte, quantity, weight, ſubſiſt without any ſubſtance, or ſubject to ſubſiſt in. Theſe are ſuch Paradoxes to Senſe and Reaſon, that they ought to be very well ſupported with Scripture, before they are received for Articles of Faith, or elſe our Faith will be as very an Accident, without any ſubſtance, as the ſacramental ſpecies themſelves are. But though they have no Text which proves the leaſt

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Tittle of all this, yet they have a Text whereon they graft this Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation, *viz. This is my Body*, which they ſay, ſignifies every thing which they teach concerning Tranſubſtantiation; but then I hope they will prove that it does ſo, not expect that we ſhould take it for granted, becauſe they ſay it. Now, not to inſiſt upon thoſe Arguments, whereby our Divines have ſo demonſtratively proved, that Tranſubſtantiation, as explained by the Church of *Rome*, cannot be the ſence of *This is my Body*, my advice to Proteſtants is to put them upon the proof, that this is the ſence of it, which in reaſon they ought to prove, becauſe there is not one word of it in the Text; and I ſhall only tell them what Proofs they ought to demand for it.

Now, I ſuppoſe, all men will think it reaſonable, that the Evidence for it, ſhould at leaſt be equal to the Evidence againſt it, though we ought indeed to have more reaſon to believe it, than to diſ-believe it; or elſe we muſt hang in ſuſpence, when the Balance is equal and turns neither way. Now I will not oppoſe the Evidence of Sence and Reaſon, againſt the Authority of Scripture; for I will never ſuppoſe that they can contradict each other; and if there ſhould appear ſome contradiction between them, I will be contented at preſent, without diſputing that point, to give it on the ſide of Scripture; but I will oppoſe the Evidence of Senſe and Reaſon againſt any private man's, or any Churches Expoſition of Scripture: and if that Expoſition they give of any Text of Scripture, as ſuppoſe, *This is my Body*, contradict the Evidence of Senſe and Reaſon, I may modeſtly require as plain proof, that this is the meaning of the Text, as I have, that ſuch a meaning is contrary to all Senſe and Reaſon: for though Senſe and Reaſon be not the Rule and Meaſure of Faith, yet we muſt

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uſe our Senſe and Reaſon in expounding Scripture, or we may quickly make a very abſurd and ſenſeleſs Religion.

Now this ſhews us what kind of Proof we muſt require, that Tranſubſtantiation is the Doctrine of the Goſpel, *viz.* as certain Proof as we have, that Tranſubſtantiation is contrary to Senſe and Reaſon. And therefore,

1. We muſt demand a ſelf-evident Proof of this, becauſe it is ſelf-evident, that Tranſubſtantiation contradicts Sence and Reaſon. Every man, who knows what the word means, (which I believe men may do, without being great Philoſophers) and will conſult his own Senſes and Reaſon, will need no Arguments to prove, that Tranſubſtantiation contradicts both. Now ſuch a Scripture-Proof, I would ſee for Tranſubſtantiation, ſo plain, and expreſs, and ſelf-evident, that no man, who underſtands the words, can doubt whether this be the meaning of them; I mean, a reaſonable, not an obſtinate, wilful, and ſceptical doubting. Now I believe, that our Adverſaries themſelves will not ſay, that *This is my Body*, is ſuch a ſelf-evident Proof of Tranſubſtantiation; I am ſure ſome of the wiſeſt men among them have not thought it ſo, and the fierce Diſputes for ſo many Ages about the interpretation of thoſe words, proves that it is not ſo: for men do not uſe to diſpute what is ſelf-evident, and proves it ſelf without any other Arguments. Now it is very unreaſonable to require any man to believe Tranſubſtantiation againſt a ſelf-evident Proof, that it is contrary to Senſe and Reaſon, without giving him a ſelf-evident Proof, that it is the Doctrine of Scripture; which is to require a man to believe againſt the beſt Reaſon and Evidence.

2. We muſt demand ſuch a Scripture-Proof of Tranſubſtan-

ſubſtantiation, as cannot poſſibly ſignifie any thing elſe; or elſe it will not anſwer that Evidence which we have againſt Tranſubſtantiation? for Senſe and Reaſon pronounce Tranſubſtantiation to be naturally impoſſible; and therefore unleſs it be as impoſſible to put any other ſenſe upon Scripture than what ſignifies Tranſubſtantiation, as it is to reconcile Tranſubſtantiation to Senſe and Reaſon, there is not ſuch good Evidence for Tranſubſtantiation, as againſt it. Were the Scripture-Proofs for Tranſubſtantiation ſo plain and evident, that it were impoſſible to put any other ſenſe on the words, then I would grant, that it is as impoſſible for thoſe who believe the Scriptures to disbelieve Tranſubſtantiation, as it is for thoſe, who truſt to their own Senſe and Reaſon, to believe it. Here the difficulty would be equal on both ſides, and then I ſhould prefer a Divine Revelation (if it were poſſible to prove ſuch a Revelation to be Divine) before natural Senſe and Reaſon; but I preſume, no man will ſay, that it is impoſſible to put another, and that a very reaſonable, interpretation upon thoſe words, *This is my Body*, without expounding them to the ſenſe of Tranſubſtantiation.

Our Roman Adverſaries do not deny, but that theſe words are capable of a figurative, as well as of a literal ſenſe; as when the Church is called the Body of Chriſt, Fleſh of his Fleſh, and Bone of his Bone, it is not meant of his natural, but his myſtical Body: and thus when the Bread is called the Body of Chriſt, it may not ſignifie his natural, but ſacramental Body, or his Body to all the ends and purpoſes of a Sacrament. Now if there be any other good ſenſe to be made of theſe words, beſides Tranſubſtantiation, there cannot be ſuch a neceſſity to expound them of Tranſubſtantiation, as there is not to expound them of it; for I do not reject Scripture, if

I deny Tranſubſtantiation, when the words of Scripture do not neceſſarily prove it; but I renounce Senſe and Reaſon, if I believe it. Now though I were bound to renounce my Senſe and Reaſon, when they contradict Scripture, yet ſure I am not bound to deny my Senſe and Reaſon, when they do not contradict Scripture; and Senſe and Reaſon are never contrary to Scripture, nor Scripture to them, when the words of Scripture are capable of ſuch an interpretation as is reconcileable both to Senſe and Reaſon: In ſuch a caſe to expound Scripture contrary to Senſe and Reaſon, is both to pervert the Scripture, and to contradict Reaſon, without any neceſſity. An unlearned man need not enter into a large Diſpute about Tranſubſtantiation; let him but require his Adverſary to give him as plain Evidence, that Tranſubſtantiation is the Doctrine of the Goſpel, as he can give him, that it is contrary to Senſe and Reaſon, and the Diſpute will quickly be at an end. It had been very eaſie to have given more inſtances under every Head, and to have obſerved more falſe ways of expounding Scripture, which the Doctors of the Church of *Rome* are guilty of; but theſe are the moſt obvious, and therefore the beſt fitted to my deſign to inſtruct unlearned men; and I muſt not ſuffer this Diſcourſe, which was at firſt intended much ſhorter than it already is, to ſwell too much under my hands.

SECT. III.

Concerning the Ancient Fathers and Writers of the Chriſtian Church.

THough Learned men may ſquabble about the Sence of Fathers and Councils, it is very unreaſonable, that Unlearned men ſhould be concerned in ſuch

Diſputes, becauſe they are not competent Judges of it; and yet there is nothing which our Roman Diſputants make a greater noiſe with, among Women and Children, and the meaneſt ſort of People, than Quotations out of Fathers and Councils, whom they pretend to be all on their ſide. Now as it is a ridiculous thing for them to talk of Fathers and Councils to ſuch People, ſo it is very ridiculous for ſuch People to be converted by Sayings out of the Fathers and Councils: I confeſs, it has made me often ſmile, with a mixture of pity and indignation, at the folly of it; for what more contemptible eaſineſs can any man be guilty of, than to change his Religion which he has been taught out of the Scriptures, and may find there if he pleaſes, becauſe he is told by ſome honeſt Prieſt, (a ſort of men who never deceive any one) that ſuch or ſuch a Father, who lived it may be they know not where nor when, and wrote they know not what, has ſpoke in favour of Tranſubſtantiation, or Purgatory, or ſome other Popiſh Doctrine.

And therefore let me adviſe our Proteſtant, who is not skilled in theſe matters, when he is urged with the Authority of Fathers, to ask them ſome few Queſtions.

1. Ask them, How you ſhall certainly know what the Judgment of the Fathers was? and this includes a great many Queſtions, which muſt be reſolved, before you can be ſure of this; as, How you ſhall know that ſuch Books were written by that Father, whoſe name it bears? or that it has not been corrupted by the ignorance or knavery of Tranſcribers, while they were in the hands of Monks, who uſurped great Authority over the Fathers, and did not only pare their Nails, but altered their very Habit and Dreſs, to fit them to the modes of the

the times, and make them faſhionable? How you ſhall know what the true meaning of thoſe words are, which they cite from them? which the words themſelves many times will not diſcover, without the Context: How you ſhall know that ſuch Sayings are honeſtly quoted, or honeſtly tranſlated? How you ſhall know whether this Father did not in other places contradict what he here ſays? or did not alter his opinion after he had wrote it, without writing publick Recantations, as St. *Auſtin* did? Whether this Father was not contradicted by other Fathers? And in that caſe, Which of the Fathers you muſt believe?

You may add, That you do not ask theſe Queſtions at random, but for great and neceſſary Reaſons: for in reading ſome late Engliſh Books both of Proteſtants and Papiſts, you find large Quotations out of the Fathers on both ſides; that ſome are charged with falſe Tranſlations, with perverting the Fathers ſenſe, with miſ-citing his words, with quoting ſpurious Authors, as it ſeems many of thoſe are which make up the late *Speculum*, or Eccleſiaſtical Proſpective-glaſs; to name no more. Now how ſhall you, who are an unlearned man, judge of ſuch Diſputes as theſe? What Books are ſpurious or genuine? whether the Fathers be rightly quoted? and what the true ſenſe of them is? For my part, I know not what Anſwer ſuch a Diſputant could make, but to bluſh, and promiſe not to alledge the Authority of Fathers any more. It is certain, in ſuch matters, thoſe who are unlearned, muſt truſt the learned; and then, I ſuppoſe, an unlearned Proteſtant will rather truſt a Proteſtant than a Popiſh Doctor, as Papiſts will rather truſt their Prieſts than Proteſtant Divines; and then there is not much to be got on either ſide, this way: For when a Proteſtant ſhews an inclination rather to believe a Popiſh than a

Protestant Divine, he is certainly three quarters a Papist before hand.

Indeed unlearned Protestants, who are inquisitive, and have time to read, have such advantages now to satisfie themselves even about the sence of Fathers and Councils, as it may be no Age before ever afforded; there being so many excellent Books written in *English*, as plainly confirm the Protestant Faith, and confute Popery, by the Testimonies and Authorities of Ancient Writers; and such men, though they do not understand *Latine* and *Greek*, are in no danger of all the Learning of their Popish Adversaries: and any man who pleases, may have recourse to such Books, and see the State of the Controversie with his own eyes, and judge for himself; but those who cannot do this, may very fairly decline such a Trial, as improper for them. For,

2. Let our Protestant ask such Disputers, whether a plain man may not attain a sufficient knowledge and certainty of his Religion, without understanding Fathers and Councils? If they say he cannot, ask them, how many Roman-Catholicks there are that understand Fathers and Councils? Ask them, how those Christians understood their Religion, who lived before there were any of these Fathers and Councils? Ask them again, whether they believe that God has made it impossible to the greatest part of Mankind, to understand the Christian Religion? For even among Christians themselves, there is not one in an hundred thousand, who understands Fathers and Councils, and it is morally impossible they should: and therefore certainly there must be a shorter and easier way to understand Christian Religion than this, or else the generallity of Mankind, even of profest Christians, are out of all possibility of Salvation. Ask them once more, Whether it be not a much easier matter for a plain honest man to learn

learn all things neceſſary to Salvation, out of the Scriptures themſelves, eſpecially with the help of a wiſe and learned Guide, than to underſtand all Fathers and Councils, and take his Religion from them? Why then do they ſo quarrel at Peoples reading the Scriptures, and put them upon reading Fathers and Councils? I ſuppoſe they will grant, the Scriptures may be read a little ſooner than ſo many Voluminous Fathers, and Labbe's Councils into the bargain; and, I believe, moſt men, who try, will think, that they are more eaſily underſtood; and therefore if Proteſtants, as they pretend, can have no certainty of the true ſence of Scripture, I am ſure there is much leſs certainty to be had from the Fathers: A ſhort time will give us a full view of the Scriptures, to read and underſtand all the Fathers, is work enough for a man's life! the Scripture is all of a piece, every part of it agrees with the reſt; the Fathers many times contradict themſelves and each other: and if men differ about the ſence of Scripture, they differ much more about Fathers and Councils. That it is a mighty Riddle, that thoſe who think ordinary Chriſtians not fit to read the Scriptures, ſhould think it neceſſary for them to underſtand Fathers and Councils; and yet they are ridiculous indeed to diſpute with every Tradeſman about Fathers and Councils, if they do not think they ought to read and underſtand them.

The ſum is, ſuch Proteſtants as are not skilled in Book-learning, may very reaſonably tell theſe Men, who urge them with the Authority of Councils and Fathers, That they do not pretend to any skill in ſuch matters, and hope it is not required of them, for if it be, they are in an ill caſe: the Holy Scriptures, not Fathers and Councils, is the Rule of their Faith; if they had read the Fathers, they ſhould believe them no farther, than what they taught

taught was agreeable to Scripture; and therefore whatever Opinions any of the Fathers had, it is no concern of theirs to know, if they can learn what the Doctrine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles was, without it: learned men may diſpute about theſe things, and they have heard learned Proteſtants affirm, that the Church of *Rome* can find none of her peculiar Doctrines in the Writings of any of the Fathers for the firſt three hundred years; and it's certain, if this be true, all the later Fathers are of no Authority to eſtabliſh any new Doctrine; for there was no more Authority in the Church, to bring in any new Doctrines, after three hundred years, than there is at this day.

Unlearned men may very honourably reject all diſpute about Fathers and Councils, (though learned men cannot, and indeed need not;) for if they are not bound to read Fathers and Councils, I think, they are not bound to underſtand them, nor to diſpute about them; and it is very unadviſably done, when they do: for it is paſt a Jeſt in ſo ſerious a matter, though otherwiſe it were comical enough, for men to be converted by Fathers and Councils, without underſtanding them.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

How to Anſwer ſome of the moſt popular Pretences urged by Papiſts againſt Proteſtants.

SECT. I.

1. *Concerning the Uncertainty of the Proteſtant Faith.*

OUR Popiſh Adverſaries of late, have not ſo much diſputed, as fenced; have neither down-right oppoſed the Proteſtant Faith, nor vindicated their own, but have betaken themſelves to ſome tricks and amuſements, to divert and perplex the Diſpute, and to impoſe upon the ignorant and unwary. One of their principal Arts has been to cry out of the Uncertainty of the Proteſtant Faith. This every body is nearly concerned in; for there is nothing wherein certainty is ſo neceſſary, and ſo much deſired, as in matters of Religion, whereon our eternal State depends. This has been often anſwered by Proteſtants, and I do not intend to enter into the merits of the Cauſe, and ſhew upon what a firm and ſure bottom the Proteſtant Faith ſtands: this is a Cavil eaſily enough expoſed to the ſcorn and contempt of all conſidering men, without ſo much trouble:

For 1. Suppoſe the Proteſtant Faith were uncertain, How is the Cauſe of the Church of *Rome* ever the better? Is this a ſufficient reaſon to turn Papiſts, becauſe Proteſtants are uncertain? Does this prove the Church of *Rome* to be Infallible, becauſe the Church of *England* is Fallible? Muſt Certainty neceſſarily be found among them, becauſe

cauſe it is not to be found with us? Is *Thomas* an honeſt man, becauſe *John* is a Knave? Theſe are two diſtinct Queſtions, and muſt be diſtinctly proved. If they can prove our Faith uncertain, and their own certain, there is reaſon then to go over to them; but if they cannot do this, they may, it may be, perſwade men to renounce the Proteſtant Faith, but not to embrace Popery. Ask them then, What greater aſſurance they have of their Faith, than we have of ours? If they tell you, their Church is Infallible; tell them, that is another Queſtion, and does not belong to this Diſpute. For the Infallibility of their Church, does not follow from the Uncertainty of our Faith; if they can prove their Church Infallible, whether they prove our Faith Uncertain or not, we will at any time change Proteſtant Certainty for Infallibility: And if they could prove our Faith uncertain, unleſs they could prove their own more certain, (though we bate them Infallibility) we may ceaſe to be Proteſtants, but ſhall never turn Papiſts.

2. Ask them, What they mean by the Uncertainty of the Proteſtant Faith? For this may ſignifie two things: either, 1. That the Objects of our Faith are in themſelves uncertain, and cannot be proved by certain Reaſons: Or 2dly, That our Perſwaſion about theſe matters, is uncertain and wavering. If they mean the firſt, then the ſence is, that the Chriſtian Religion is an uncertain thing, and cannot be certainly proved; for this is the whole Proteſtant Faith: We believe the Apoſtles Creed, and whatever is contained in the Writings of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, and this is all we believe. And I hope, they will not ſay theſe things are uncertain; for then they renounce the Chriſtian Religion, and Infallibility it ſelf cannot help them out: for Infallibility cannot make that certain, which is in it ſelf uncertain:

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an infallible man muſt know things as they are, or elſe he is miſtaken, and ceaſes to be infallible; and therefore what is certain, he infallibly knows to be certain, and what is uncertain, he infallibly knows to be uncertain: for the moſt certain and infallible knowledge does not change its Object, but ſees it juſt as it is: And thefore they muſt allow the Objects of our Faith, or the Proteſtant Faith, as to the matter of it, to be very certain, and built upon certain reaſon, or elſe their infallible Church can have no certainty of the Chriſtian Faith.

If they mean the ſecond thing, that we have no certain perſwaſion about what we profeſs to believe: This is a great abuſe to Proteſtants, as if they were all Knaves and Hypocrites, who do not heartily and firmly believe what we profeſs to believe: and a Proteſtant, who knows that he does very firmly and ſtedfaſtly believe his Religion, ought to reject ſuch a Villanous Accuſation as this, with indignation and ſcorn. Indeed it is both impudent and ſilly for any man to tell a Proteſtant, that his Faith is uncertain, (as that ſignifies an uncertain and doubtful Perſwaſion) when he knows and feels the contrary; and no body elſe can know this but himſelf: In what Notion then is the Proteſtant Faith uncertain? what can Faith ſignifie, but either the Objects of Faith, or the internal Aſſent and Perſwaſion? The Objects of our Faith are certain, if Chriſtian Religion be ſo, that is, they have very certain Evidence: our Aſſent and Perſwaſion is very certain, as that is oppoſed to all doubtfulneſs and wavering: And what certainty then is wanting to the Proteſtant Faith?

When then you hear any of theſe men declaiming about the uncertainty of the Proteſtant Faith, onely ask them, What they mean by the Proteſtant Faith? whether the Articles of your Faith, that they are uncertain,

or the Act of Faith, your internal Assent and Perswasion? If they say, they mean the Act of Faith: Tell them, that it is a strange presumption in them to pretend to know your Heart; that you know that best your self, whether you do firmly and stedfastly believe your Religion; and to give them satisfaction in that point, you assure them, that you do: As for the Objects of your Faith, or what it is you Believe, tell them, your are a Member of the Church of *England*, and embrace the Doctrine of it, and there they may find your Faith both as a Christian, and as a Protestant; and may try their skill on it, when they please, to prove any part of it uncertain, and you are ready to defend it. This is a plain and fair Answer, and I believe you will hear no more of them.

For as for their common Argument to prove the Uncertainty of the Protestant Faith, That there is a great variety of Opinions among Protestants, and that they condemn one another with equal confidence and assurance, Ask them, how this proves your Fath to be Uncertain, either as to its Object, or as to its Assent? May not what you believe, be very certainly true, because some men believe the contrary? Tell them, you do not place the certainty of what you believe, upon any man's believing, or not believing it, but upon the certain Reasons you have to prove it; and therefore if they would convince you, that what you believe is not certain, they must disprove your Reasons, not meerly tell you, that other men think it false or uncertain, and believe otherwise: Thus does it prove, that you give an uncertain and doubtful Assent to what you profess to believe, because other men are very fully perswaded of the contrary? Pray tell them, that you do not build your Assent upon other mens Perswasions, but upon the Reasons of your Faith, and while they are unshaken,

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you ſhall believe as you do, and with the ſame aſſurance, whoever believes otherwiſe.

There are two things indeed, which this Argument proves, but they ſignifie nothing to weaken the Proteſtant Faith.

1. That all the Doctrines which are profeſſed by ſome Proteſtants, are not certain; for ſome of them muſt be falſe, when there are contradictory Doctrines maintained and profeſſed by ſeveral Sects of Proteſtants; but then no man, that I know of, ever ſaid, that all Proteſtant Doctrines were certain, which I hopes does not hinder but that ſome Proteſtant Doctrines may be certain; and then the Doctrines of the Church of *England* may be certain, though ſome other Communions of Proteſtants have erred.

2. This Argument proves alſo, that men who are miſtaken, may be very confidently perſwaded of their miſtakes, and therefore the confidence of perſwaſion does not prove the certainty of their Faith; and I never heard any man ſay that it did: But I hope this does not prove that a man, who is certain upon evident Reaſons, muſt be miſtaken too, becauſe men, who are certain without Reaſon, may miſtake.

And yet this very Argument, from the different and contrary Opinions among Proteſtants to prove the uncertainty of the Proteſtans Faith, ſignifies nothing, as to our Diſputes with the Church of *Rome*: For ask them, what they would think of the Proteſtant Faith, were all Proteſtants of a mind? Would their Conſent and Agreement prove the Certainty of the Proteſtant Faith? Then the Proteſtant Faith, in oppoſition to Popery, is very certain: for they all agree in condemning the Errors and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*; and thus I think they get nothing by this Argument: for if the

Diſſentions of Proteſtants proves the uncertainty of their Faith, as to ſuch matters, wherein they differ, then by the ſame Rule their Agreement in oppoſition to Popery, ſhews their great certainty in ſuch matters: And this I ſuppoſe is no great Inducement to a Proteſtant to turn Papiſt.

SECT. II.

Concerning Proteſtant Miſ-repreſentations of Popery.

THis has been another late Artifice of our *Roman* Adverſaries to amuſe ignorant People with a great noiſe of Miſ-repreſenting: That Proteſtant Divines have painted Popery in ſuch horrid ſhapes, as to diſturb the Imaginations of People, and to beget an incurable Averſion in them againſt Popery, without underſtanding what it is. I ſhall not now diſpute this matter over again: there has been ſo much of late ſaid of it, and this Pretence ſo ſhamefully baffled, in anſwer both to the Repreſenter, and to Monſieur *De Meaux*'s Expoſition, that I am apt to think, they themſelves could be very glad that it had never been mentioned, or could now be forgot; and therefore referring the inquiſitive Readers to thoſe late Books, wherein they will find this Controverſie fairly ſtated; I have ſome few things to add, which are plain and obvious to every body; and that both with reference to the Probability of this Charge, and to the Conſequences of it.

Firſt, As to the Probability of this Charge. Now, 1. Ask them, whether the firſt Reformers charged the Church of *Rome* with ſuch Doctrines and Practices as they were not guilty of? We have not, that I know of,

of, increaſed our Charge againſt the Church of *Rome* in this Age; if there has been any difference, we have rather been more favourable and candid in our Cenſures of ſome of their Doctrines, than the firſt Reformers were. Now is it likely, that the firſt Reformers ſhould charge the Church of *Rome* wronfully? No man can be a Miſ-repreſenter, but either out of Ignorance or Deſign; which of theſe then can we, with any Probability, charge the firſt Reformers with?

As for Ignorance, is it a probable thing, that *Luther*, *Melanchon*, *Oecolampadius*, *Zuinglius*, *Bucer*, *Calvin*, or to come to our own Engliſh Reformers, that Archbiſhop *Cranmer*, and others, who had all been Papiſts themſelves, ſhould be ignorant what was taught and practiſed in the Church of *Rome*? It is now thought in this very Cauſe, a very conſiderable Proof, that Proteſtants do Miſ-repreſent Papiſts, becauſe ſome Papiſts deny ſuch Doctrines and Practices as Proteſtants charge them with; and, ſay they, can you think that Papiſts do not underſtand their own Religion better than Proteſtants do? Now though this may be made a Queſtion, and I am very apt to think, that compare the Learned and the Unlearned Proteſtants and Papiſts together, there are more Proteſtants than Papiſts, who underſtand Popery: and not onely Experience verifies this, but there is a plain reaſon why it ſhould be ſo; becauſe it is the Principle of Proteſtants, that they muſt neither believe nor disbelieve any thing, without underſtand it; but an implicite Faith in the Church, governs the unlearned Papiſts, and many of thoſe who ſhould be learned too.

But let that be as it will, this Argument ſignifies nothing to our firſt Reformers: for if Papiſts may be preſumed

ſumed to underſtand their own Religion, the firſt Reformers, who were all educated in Popery, might be as well preſumed to underſtand what Popery then was; and therefore there can be no reaſon to ſuſpect that they Miſ-repreſented Popery out of Ignorance.

Nor is it more probable, that they ſhould Miſ-repreſent Popery out of Intereſt and Deſign: for if they were conſcious to themſelves, that Popery was not ſo bad as they repreſent it to be, why ſhould they themſelves have ſet up for Reformers? and what hope could they have, that at that time, when Popery was ſo well known, they ſhould perſwade the World to believe their Miſ-repreſentations?

Was it ſo deſirable a thing for men to bring all the Powers of the Church and Court of *Rome* upon themſelves, meerly to gratifie a Miſ-repreſenting humour? Do theſe men remember what our Reformers ſuffered, for oppoſing Popery? the loſs of their Eſtates, their Liberties, their Lives, all the Vengeance of a blind and enraged Zeal: And did they undergo all this with ſuch conſtancy and Chriſtian patience, only for the ſake of telling Lyes, and raſing ſcandalous Reports of the Church of *Rome?* We think it a very good Argument, that the Apoſtles and firſt Preachers of Chriſtianity were very honeſt men, and had no deſign to cheat the World, becauſe they ſerved no worldly Intereſt by it; but chearfully expoſed themſelves to all manner of Sufferings in Preaching the Goſpel: and why does not the ſame Argument prove our firſt Reformers to be honeſt men, and then they could not be wilful Miſ-repreſenters?

Nay, if we will but allow them to have been cunning men (and it is evident, they did not want wit) they would never have undertaken ſo hopeleſs a deſign, as to run down

Popery

Popery meerly by Mis-representing it; when, had their Exceptions against Popery been only Mis-representations of their own, all the World could have confuted them: had the Reformers been onely Mis-representers, can we think, that they could have imposed upon such vast numbers of Men, Learned and Unlearned, who knew and saw what Popery was? They were no Fools themselves, and therefore could not hope to impose such a Cheat upon the World.

2. Ask them again, How old this Complaint is, of Protestant Mis-representations of Popery? how long it has been discovered, that Popery has been thus Abused and Mis-represented? were the first Reformers charged with these Mis-representations by their Adversaries in those days? did they deny, that they gave Religious Worship to Saints, and Angels, and the Virgin *Mary*, to Images and Reliques? did they cry out of Mis-representations, when they were charged with such Doctrines and Practices as these? or did they defend them, and endeavour to answer those Arguments which the Reformers brought against them? And yet methinks if Popery had been so grosly Mis-represented by the Reformers, this would as soon have been discovered by the Learned Papists of those days, as by our late Representer; but it is most likely they did not then think Popery so much Mis-represented, for if they had, they would certainly have complained of it: So that the high improbability of the thing, is a sufficient Reason to Unlearned Protestants, to reject this Charge of Protestant Mis-representations of Popery, as nothing else but a Popish Calumny against Protestants; and to conclude, that if Popery be Mis-represented now, it is onely by themselves, and that is the very truth of the Case.

Secondly,

Secondly, Let us conſider this Charge of Miſ-repreſentations in the Conſequences of it: It would a little puzzle a man to gueſs, what ſervice they intend to do the Church of *Rome* by it. For,

1. By complaining of ſuch Miſ-repreſentations of Popery, they plainly confeſs, that thoſe Doctrines and Practices, which we charge the Church of *Rome* with, are very bad, and fit to be rejected and abhorred of all Chriſtians. This the Repreſenter himſelf confeſſes, and is very Copious and Rhetorical upon it. Now this is of mighty dangerous conſequence; for if it appears, that we have not Miſ-repreſented them, that the Doctrines and Practices we charge them with, are truly the Doctrines and Practices of the Church of *Rome*, then by their own confeſſion, Popery is a very bad Religion, and to be rejected by Chriſtians: Then there was a very juſt reaſon for our Separation from the Church of *Rome*, and we are no longer either Schiſmaticks or Hereticks; and if the Cauſe be put upon this Iſſue, we need deſire no better Vindication of the Church of *England:* for if they cannot prove us Hereticks or Schiſmaticks, till they can prove us Miſ-repreſenters, I believe, we are pretty ſecure for this Age.

2. Theſe men, who complain ſo much of Miſ-repreſenting, endeavour to make the Doctrines of the Church of *Rome*, look as like Proteſtant Doctrines, as poſſibly they can, as if there were little or no difference between them: Now methinks this is no great reaſon for a Proteſtant to turn Papiſt, that the Popiſh Faith is ſo much the better, the nearer it comes to the Proteſtant Faith. The truth is, the chief Myſtery in this late Trade of Repreſenting and Miſ-repreſenting, is no more but this, to joyn a Proteſtant Faith with Popiſh Practices; to believe as Proteſtants do, and do as Papiſts do. As to give

ſome

ſome few inſtances of this in the Papiſt Miſ-repreſented and Repreſented.

The Papiſt Repreſented, believes it damnable to Worſhip Stocks and Stones for Gods, to Pray to Pictures or Images of Chriſt, the Virgin Mary, *or any other Saints.* This is good Proteſtant Doctrine: but then this Papiſt ſays his Prayers before an Image, Kneels and Bows before it, and pays all external Acts of Adoration to Chriſt and the Saints, as repreſented by their Images; though *it is not properly the Image he honours, but Chriſt and his Saints by the Images.* Which is down-right Popery in Practice.

Thus *he believes it is a moſt damnable Idolatry, to make Gods of men, either living or dead.* Which is the Proteſtant Faith: but yet he prays to Saints, and beggs their Interceſſion, without believing them to be Gods, or his Redeemers; which is Popery in Practice.

He believes it damnable, to think the Virgin Mary *more powerful in Heaven than Chriſt.* Which is Proteſtant Doctrine: but yet he prays to Her oftner than either to God or Chriſt, ſays ten *Ave-Maries* for one *Pater Noſter*; which is a Popiſh Devotion.

He believes it unlawful to commit Idolatry, and moſt damnable to Worſhip any Breaden God. Which is ſpoke like a Proteſtant; but yet he pays Divine Adoration to the Sacrament, which is done like a Papiſt. And thus in moſt of thoſe thirty ſeven Particulars of the double Characters of a Papiſt Miſ-repreſented, his great Art is to Reconcile a Proteſtant Faith with Popiſh Practices.

So that this New way of Repreſenting Popery, is no reaſon to a Proteſtant to alter his Faith, becauſe, it ſeems, they believe in many things juſt as we do; but, I think, it is a very great reaſon for a Papiſt to alter his Practice, becauſe a Proteſtant Faith and Popiſh Worſhip do not very well agree. Thoſe who would not make Gods of

Stocks and Stones, of dead Men and Women, had certainly better not Worship them, which is the most certain way not to make them Gods; and those who think it such damnable Idolatry to Worship *a Breaden God*, in my Opinion, are on the safer side not to Worship the visible Species of Bread in the Eucharist. Let but our Protestant observe *this*, That when they would Represent Popery most favourably, they either say what Protestants do, or something as like it, as they can, and he will see no reason, either to change his Faith or his Practice.

The END.